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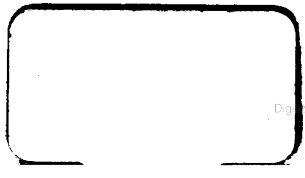
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THE

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OR

REFLECTIONS

ON

DAVID HUMPHREYS' ESSAY ON THE LIFE

OF

ISRAEL PUTNAM.

ALSO,

NOTICES OF OLIVER W. B. PEABODY'S LIFE OF THE SAME,
S. SWETT'S SKETCH OF BUNKER HILL BATTLE,
ETC. ETC.

BY JOHN FELLOWS.

"History has been styled, 'The evidence of time—the depository of events.' It should oblige all who have performed any distinguished part on the theater of the world to appear before us in their proper character; and to render the account of their actions at the tribunal of posterity, as models which ought to be followed, or as examples to be censured and avoided."—*Gordon, Hist. Am. Rev.*

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JAMES D. LOCKWOOD,
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1843.

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PREFACE.

"Is the time never to arrive when an honest man can tell the truth as to the events of the revolution? Are facts, in regard to the character and conduct of Gen. Putnam, to be refuted by idle denials, and tales to be deemed veracious because they have been often repeated? I trust not, but that the time will come when the candid and impartial historian will do full justice to the men who were distinguished in the war for national independence."

The above is an extract of a letter in reference to the work I had commenced. The prophecy of the writer is, I believe, already fulfilled. *The fullness of time*, in respect to this matter, has at length arrived.

Judge Marshall has done much to dissipate the mist that enveloped a portion of our revolutionary history, and other lights have appeared since his publication, that clear the way for Mr. Bancroft to complete the work.

Objections are made to my undertaking; that it is too late to correct erroneous statements of occurrences which happened so long ago as our revolutionary war; that the sacred ashes of the dead should not be disturbed, *de mortuis nil nisi bonum*, etc. As though the truth should not be told, for the benefit of the living, from fear of injuring the deceased, who are beyond the reach of harm. This principle acted upon would render history as worthless as romance.

Many even say, if they suspected they had been

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cheated in respect to the history of Putnam, they would not wish to be undeceived; showing thereby the tenacity with which the generality of mankind cling to preconceived opinions. With such, all argument would be vain and useless.

It is, moreover, said that the feelings of the descendants of Gen. Putnam would be wounded by any remarks tending to depreciate the military fame of their ancestor. To this I answer, that in the United States every person is estimated by his individual merits, and the descendants of Gen. Putnam may be entitled to the highest respect, without claiming one of the greatest military heroes in the world for their ancestor.

If the history of our glorious revolution has been perverted by awarding undue honor to some, to the neglect of those more deserving; if the stories promulgated to the world by Col. Humphreys and others of the wonderful prowess and achievements of Israel Putnam are not true, and the credit bestowed upon them disreputable to an intelligent, free people, I can see no reason why they should not be shown to be at variance with fact. This is the object I have in view, without any ill-will towards Gen. Putnam, or any of his family, none of whom have I ever known.

I have not written without book; but if any errors, in matter of fact, should be pointed out, that have crept into the work, they will be acknowledged with pleasure, and corrected. Vituperative abuse will be suffered to pass unheeded.

New York, Feb., 1843.

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INTRODUCTION.

I SHALL have frequent occasion to refer to the journal of Major Robert Rogers, who commanded a corps of provincial troops denominated Rangers, during the French or Seven Years' War, so called. The journal was published at London, in 1765. And as the work is probably little known in America, it will doubtless be satisfactory to the reader to be made acquainted with the character and standing of the author. For this purpose, I will in the first place give an abstract of the introduction to the work; followed by official documents, establishing the reputation Major Rogers acquired with the respective commanders; likewise examples of his hazardous enterprises.

"I claim," says the author, "the merit of impartially relating matters of fact without disguise or equivocation. Most of those which relate to myself can at present be attested by living witnesses."

As an apology for defects in the style of his journal, he says: "It is the soldier, not the scholar, who writes; that many things here were written in deserts, on rocks and mountains, amidst the hurries, disorders, and noise of war. This was my situation when the following journals were transmitted to the generals and commanders I acted under; which I am not now at liberty to correct, except in some very gross and palpable errors."

Major Rogers was a native of a frontier town in the

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then province of New Hampshire, where, he says, "I could hardly avoid obtaining some knowledge of the manners, customs, and language of the Indians; and my manner of life was such as led me to a general acquaintance with the British and French settlements.

"At the opening of the campaign, in 1755, troops were levied in the several provinces of New England, New York, and New Jersey. The general rendezvous was appointed at Albany, in the province of New York, and the troops put under the command of Major-general (since Sir William) Johnson. I had the honor of commanding a company in the troops furnished by New Hampshire; and was recommended to the general as a person well acquainted with the haunts and passes of the enemy, and the Indian method of fighting."

"The 24th of September, [1755,] I received an order from the general to proceed with four men to Crown Point, and, if practicable, bring a prisoner from thence; and with an account of the manner in which I executed this order, I shall begin my journals."

The major then proceeds to detail his various expeditions and rencounters with the enemy; of which I shall presently give an account of two, that proved very disastrous to the rangers. Reference to others will also occur, in the course of this work.—I now pass to the official documents alluded to above.

"In January, 1758," says the author, "Lord Loudoun informed me of his intention to levy five additional companies of rangers, desiring me to name the persons whom I thought fit for officers, and such as might be depended upon to levy the men, giving me the following instructions: 'Whereas, I have thought proper to

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augment the rangers with five additional companies, that is, four New England and one Indian company; and whereas I have an entire confidence in your skill and knowledge of the men most fit for that service; I do, therefore, by these presents, appoint you to raise such a number of non-commissioned officers and private men as will be necessary to complete the said five companies, upon the following establishments,' &c.—'You will not fail to instruct the officers appointed to this service that they are not to enlist any man for a less term than one year, nor any but what are able-bodied, well acquainted with the woods, used to hunting, and every way qualified for the ranging service. You are also to observe that the men are all to be at Fort Edward on or before the 15th of March next ensuing.'

"In pursuance of the above instructions, I immediately sent officers to the New England provinces, where, by the assistance of my friends, the requested augmentation of rangers was quickly completed, the whole five companies being ready for service by the fourth day of March."

On the 6th of April, 1758, Capt. Rogers was promoted to a majority, by Gen. Abercrombie, who had succeeded Lord Loudoun, on the latter's returning to England. The commission says: "Having the greatest confidence in your loyalty, courage and skill in this kind of service, [that of the rangers,] I do, by virtue of the power and authority to me given by his majesty, hereby constitute and appoint you to be major of the rangers in his majesty's service, and likewise captain of a company of said rangers," &c.

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At the close of the French war in America, in 1760, Major Rogers was commissioned, by Gen. Amherst, then commander-in-chief, to receive the surrender of Detroit and other western posts, then in possession of the French. The commission is addressed to Major Rogers, commanding his majesty's *independent companies of rangers.* It is dated at the head-quarters in the camp of Montreal, 12th of September, 1760.

Major Rogers gives a particular account of the manner in which he executed this service, including his correspondence with the French commander at Detroit, and a journal of his whole tour, which terminated at New York, February the 14th, 1761. And with this he closes his book, an octavo volume of two hundred and forty-eight pages.

Thus it appears that Major Rogers, by his fidelity, courage, and skill, obtained the fullest confidence and approbation of the several general officers under whom he served from the commencement to the end of the war. And as his journals, although not formally addressed to the commanders-in-chief, were constantly submitted to their inspection; and, moreover, as his work was published soon after the close of the war, while living witnesses of the transactions therein recorded might contradict his statements, if incorrect, we may safely place the utmost faith in the truth of the record.

The author subjoins to the work the following advertisement:—"It is proposed to continue this journal in a second volume, containing an account of my travels into the country of the Cherokees and of the southern Indians; also of my second tour into the interior coun-

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try upon the great lakes, and of the Indian wars in America since the year 1760, with correct plans of all the British forts upon the American continent."

I take the following notice of Major Rogers and the rangers from Mr. Edward Everett's Life of John Stark, which is incorporated in Professor Sparks' "Library of American Biography."

"A corps of rangers was enlisted in New Hampshire, by Robert Rogers, who acquired great reputation as a partisan officer in the progress of the war. Stark's experience on scouting parties obviously fitted him for the service; and his character was already so well established, that he received a commission as a lieutenant.

"The journal of his service with these rangers was published by Major Rogers in 1765, at London, and presents an exceedingly interesting view of their severe and perilous warfare. Their duty was to reconnoitre the hostile posts and armies, to surprise straggling parties, and obtain prisoners, to effect diversions by false attacks, to serve as guides and couriers. They acted in a corps independent of the line of the army, under their own officers, and with their own regulations, as prescribed by their gallant leader, and still preserved in his journal alluded to."*

"Early in January, 1757, a party of the rangers was detached on an expedition down the lake, which ended in an engagement of great severity, in which we behold clear indications of the future hero of Bennington."

* These companies were kept, during the war, in the pay of the crown; and after the peace, the officers were allowed half-pay in the British establishment.—Belknap's Hist. of New Hampshire.—EDIT.

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Here Mr. Everett gives a detail of this expedition, from Rogers' journal, in an improved style, with some additional information from other sources.

"The action, which began at two o'clock in the afternoon, was kept up till sunset, when Major Rogers received a wound through his wrist, which prevented him from holding his gun.

"The enemy used every artifice to induce the rangers to submit. He assured them, at one time, that large reinforcements were at hand, by whom they would be cut to pieces without mercy, and that if they surrendered they should be treated with kindness. He called on Rogers by name, and assured him of his esteem and friendship, and expressed his regret that his brave companions in arms should persist in maintaining the contest, at the hazard of certain death. But these blandishments were as unavailing as the superior physical power of the enemy; and after Major Rogers's second wound had disabled him, the contest was kept up by Lieutenant Stark with equal bravery and conduct, till at the approach of night the fire of the enemy ceased, and the rangers were able to take up their retreat in safety.

"The rangers were much weakened by the loss of men killed, and they had a great number too severely wounded to travel without extreme difficulty and the assistance of their comrades. Still, however, they were so near the French fort, that it was deemed absolutely necessary to make the best of their way during the night. Perceiving a large fire in the woods, which they supposed to be that of a hostile party, they made a long circuit in the night, and found themselves in the

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morning six miles south of the advanced guard of the French, on Lake George. The wounded were unable to advance further on foot, and they were still forty miles from Fort William Henry.

"In this distressing state of affairs, Lieutenant Stark volunteered, with two of his men, to proceed to the fort and return with sleighs for the wounded. The snow was four feet deep on a level, and could be traversed only in snow-shoes. Notwithstanding their efforts and exhaustion the preceding day and night, Stark and his companions reached the fort, at a distance of forty miles, by evening. They got back to their companions with a sleigh and a small reinforcing party by the next morning. The party, reduced to forty-eight effective and six wounded men, with the prisoners they had taken from the convoy, reached the fort in safety, the same evening.

"In this severe affair, the rangers, out of seventy-eight men, had fourteen killed, six wounded, and six taken prisoners. The force of the enemy engaged amounted to two hundred and fifty, of which, according to a statement subsequently made by the enemy to Major Rogers, one hundred and sixteen were killed or mortally wounded. A large share of the honor of the day unquestionably belongs to Stark. After the first partial success against the convoy, it was recommended by the council of officers to retreat, by a different route from that by which they came; a settled practice of warfare borrowed by the rangers from the Indians. Had they pursued this prudent course, they would have escaped the battle. Rogers however, rendered confident by a long series of successful adventures, and

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relying on the terrors with which his rangers had inspired the enemy, declared that they would not *dare* pursue him, and took the same route back.

"After Captain Spikeman was killed and Rogers was disabled by his wounds, Stark's fortitude and perseverance prevented the party from throwing away their lives, in a panic flight before a victorious enemy.

"On the reorganization of the corps, Stark received the justly merited promotion to the rank of captain, in the place of Spikeman who was killed. The whole party were honorably noticed by the commander-in-chief."

The statement respecting Rogers' determination to return by the same route in which they came, is taken from a note by the editor of the Concord, N. H., edition of Rogers' journal, on the authority of a Mr. Shute, who was in the action.—That Stark returned to the party, as above stated, I presume, is a mistake. It is not unlikely that he volunteered to proceed to the fort, although Rogers, very properly in an official report, says, "From Lake George I despatched Lieut. Stark with two men to Fort William Henry, to procure conveyance for our wounded men thither; and the next morning we were met by a party of fifteen men with a sled, under the command of Lieut. Buckley, of Hobb's company of rangers, at the first narrows at Lake George."

The following is an abstract from the journal:

"Having laid my return, says Rogers, of the killed, wounded, and missing, in the above action, before Maj. Sparks, commanding officer at Fort Edward, he transmitted it to the general. And the 30th of January fol-

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lowing, I wrote to Capt. James Abercrombie, then at Albany, recommending such officers as I thought most deserving to fill the vacancies occasioned by the late action; and I received the following answer:

'Albany, Feb. 6, 1757.

'DEAR SIR:

'The general received your report by Maj. Sparks, and returns you and your men thanks for your good behavior. On receiving the account of your skirmish, we sent an express to Boston, and expect his return in a few days. Please to send me the names of the officers you would recommend for your own company, and also to fill the vacancies in the others.—I yesterday received yours of the 30th of January. You cannot imagine how all ranks of people here are pleased with your conduct, and that of your men; for my own part, it is no more than I expected. * * * * As soon as Gen. Abercrombie receives Lord Loudoun's instructions in regard to the rangers, I shall send you notice of it; in the interim, I hope you will get the better of your wound. If I can be of any service to you or your men, as long as they continue to behave so well, you may command your most humble servant,

'JAMES ABERCROMBIE, aid-de-camp.

'To Capt. ROBERT ROGERS.'"

The Concord editor, above mentioned, says of Rogers: "He was a man of great presence of mind, intrepidity, and perseverance in the accomplishment of his plans. He was six feet in height, well-proportioned, and one of the most active and athletic men of his time.

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The Indians entertained a great dread of him, and with very good reason.—The late Gen. Stark, who had been for years the companion and friend of Rogers, gave him full credit for his courage."

I will give here another specimen of the severe and hazardous duties imposed upon Maj. Rogers and the rangers, and of their courage and perseverance in the performance of them: in which it is also shown that Capt. Putnam had no connection with this corps.

"On the 28th of February, 1758, Col. Haviland, who then commanded at Fort Edward, ordered out a scout under the direction of one Putnam, who commanded a company of Connecticut provincials, with some of my men, giving out publicly at the same time, that, upon Putnam's return, I should be sent to the French forts with a strong party of four hundred rangers. This was known not only to the officers, but soldiers also, before Putnam's departure.

"While this party was out, a man in the service of Mr. Best, a sutler, was captured by a party from Ticonderoga, and one of Putnam's men deserted to the enemy. Upon Capt. Putnam's return, we were informed, *he had ventured within eight miles of the French fort at Ticonderoga*, and that a party *he had sent* to make discoveries reported to him, that there were nearly six hundred Indians not far from the enemy's quarters.

"March 10th. Soon after the said Capt. Putnam's return, in consequence of *positive* orders from Col. Haviland, I this day began a march for the neighborhood of Carillon, [the French name of Ticonderoga,] not with a party of four hundred men, as first given out, but of one hundred and eighty men only, officers included. I

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acknowledge I entered upon this service, and viewed this small detachment of brave men march out, with no little concern and uneasiness of mind; for as there was the greatest reason to expect that the enemy were, by the prisoner and deserter above mentioned, fully informed of the design of sending me out upon Putnam's return, what could I think, to see my party, instead of being augmented, reduced to less than half the number originally proposed? I must confess it appeared to me, ignorant and unskilful as I then was in politics and the arts of war, incomprehensible; *but my commander doubtless had his reasons, and is able to vindicate his own conduct.* [The foregoing clause is italicized by the author; who doubtless had his suspicions that Col. Haviland had been influenced by improper motives in this case. And I am inclined to believe he was moved by jealousy at the fame of the American partisan officer, Rogers, and his rangers, and intended they should be massacred. There are such wretches in all armies. America has not been free from them.] We marched to the half-way brook, and there encamped the first night."—Journal, p. 79.)

Here the author gives a minute detail of his scout, and of his bloody, disastrous conflict with the enemy; which occupies ten octavo pages. This detail would afford but little interest to the reader, at the present day. I, therefore, pass to the author's concluding remarks:

"The enemy pushed us so close in front, that the parties were not more than twenty yards asunder in general, and sometimes intermixed with each other. The fire continued almost constant for an hour and a half, from the beginning of the attack, in which we lost

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eight officers, and more than one hundred privates killed upon the spot. We were at last obliged to break, and I with about twenty men ran up the hill to Crafton, where we stopped and fired on the Indians, who were eagerly pursuing us with numbers we could not withstand. Lieut. Phillips, being surrounded by three hundred Indians, was at this time capitulating for himself and party, on the other part of the hill. He spoke to me, and said if the enemy would give them good quarters, he thought it best to surrender, otherwise that he would fight while he had one man left to fire a gun.*

"I now retreated with the remainder of my party, in the best manner possible; several who were wounded and fatigued, were taken by the Indians. We reached Lake George in the evening, where we found several wounded men, whom we took with us to the place where we had left our sleds. From this place I sent an express to Fort Edward, desiring Mr. Haviland to send a party to assist in bringing in the wounded. We passed the night here without fire, or blankets which had fallen into the enemy's hands. In the morning we proceeded up the lake, and, at Hoop island, met Capt. John Stark coming to our relief, with provisions, blankets, and sleighs. We encamped there that night, and on the evening of the next day, March 15th, arrived at Fort Edward.

"The number of the enemy who attacked us was about seven hundred, of whom six hundred were In-

* This unfortunate officer and his party, upon the strongest assurances of good treatment, after they surrendered, were tied to trees, and hewed to pieces in the most barbarous and shocking manner.

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dians. We afterwards learned that we killed one hundred and fifty of them, and wounded as many more. I will not pretend to say what would have been the result of this unfortunate expedition had our numbers been four hundred strong, as was contemplated; but it is due to those brave officers and men who accompanied me, most of whom are now no more, to declare, that every man, in his respective station, behaved with uncommon resolution and courage; nor do I know an instance during the action in which the prudence or good conduct of one of them could be questioned." (Journal, p. 87.)

In making the above abstract from Rogers' journal, I have in some parts adopted the language of the Concord, N. H., edition of that work. The editor of this edition, by the way, has taken unbounded liberty with the original, adding to, and deducting from it, *ad libitum;* as well as occasionally changing its phraseology. To this perhaps there would be no objection, provided the reader were informed of the course taken. The diction, where the editor appears to take any pains about it, is improved; and the additions are probably correct, particularly the information derived from Gen. Stark, whose Life is included in the same volume, which was the principal object of the publication. The journal, moreover, would well admit of great curtailment in its details, judiciously made. The editor, however, did not, I think, take sufficient time to prepare the work so well as he might have done.

REVIEW OF ROGERS' JOURNAL.

The following is the only English notice of the work, that has fallen under my observation:

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"'Journals of Major Robert Rogers; containing an account of the several excursions he made, under the generals who commanded on the continent of America, during the late war. From which may be collected the most material circumstances of every campaign on that continent, from the commencement to the conclusion of the war.' From the specimen of the work now before us, it appears that the accounts of Major Rogers may be depended upon by the public; they are undoubtedly as authentic as they are important and necessary to those who would acquire a thorough understanding of the nature and progress of the late military operations in North America.

"The author writes like an honest, a sensible, and a modest man; and has given, throughout his whole account, undoubted proofs that he is a brave and skilful officer. He headed, with much reputation, the provincial troops called rangers, during the whole course of what were called the *French* wars in America."—Bibliotheca Americana Nova, or catalogue of books relating to America, printed from 1700 to 1800. By O. Rich. London, 1832.

That no doubt may rest on the mind of the reader in regard to the authenticity of the statements of facts by Maj. Rogers, in his journal, the following testimony of his title to credibility has been obtained from the distinguished gentlemen therein named, citizens of his native state, where his character would doubtless be duly estimated:

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"Concord, July 16, 1842.

"DEAR SIR—

"I have made some inquiry respecting Major R. Rogers, and among our oldest inhabitants I find but *one opinion* respecting his character, and that is fully expressed in the note enclosed to me, and transmitted herewith to you, from Gov. Hill.

"Mr. Hill has perhaps a better knowledge of Major Rogers' character, as an officer, than any other person here: he has been prompted by reasons which could not have operated on others.

"Respectfully, your obedient servant,

"ROBERT DAVIS.

"Mr. CHARLES COFFIN, New York city."

"Concord, July 2, 1842.

"GEN. ROBERT DAVIS:

"MY DEAR SIR—

"I have this moment read Mr. Coffin's letter addressed to you, requesting information in relation to the character of the late Maj. Robert Rogers. Having recently had occasion to make inquiries relative to his early history, I find nothing in the region of his birth that goes at all to discredit him. One of the last of his blood relations in this vicinity who personally remembered him, a lady, died about one year ago. From her mouth, through Mark Burnham, Esq., a native of the same town with Rogers, I derived the information that all the family were proud of his name, and were reluctant to associate it with a reputation that was not entirely unsullied. Maj. Rogers never resided in this state permanently after the commencement of the Revolutionary War: he was in the British service in Canada after the

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close of the old French War, partly in a military, and partly in a civil capacity. The only child bearing his name was several years under my care as guardian: this circumstance, among others, has led me more particularly to mark the character of the celebrated warrior. I consider him to have been one of the most talented men of the country—perhaps the best partisan officer this country ever produced. I believe him to have been the author of that perfect mode of attack and defence which enabled a hundred of the rangers to do more service than thousands of the British regulars, especially in the winter service of the old war of 1756. Such safety to troops on fatigue amid the severest seasons of a severe climate was never secured—such certainty in the results, either on the advance or retreat, perhaps, was never realized by any other force than the rangers, under the perfect arrangement and discipline invented by Rogers. I consider him to have been as great a man in his peculiar sphere as Napoleon Bonaparte, and of moral courage and honesty coming nearly if not quite up to the mark of Andrew Jackson.

"I am, respectfully, sir, your obedient servant,

ISAAC HILL."

MANTE'S HISTORY OF THE WAR.

In the course of this volume, frequent reference will be made to the following work:

"History of the late war in North America and the Islands of the West Indies; including the campaigns of 1763 and 1764, against his majesty's Indian enemies. By Thomas Mante, Major of a brigade in the campaign of 1764. London, 1772."

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A quarto volume of 542 pages, with a volume containing maps and plans.

The Bibliotheca Americana Nova speaks thus of the work: "Mr. Mante explains the cause of the commencement of hostilities with the French in North America in a satisfactory manner, and leads the reader through a circumstantial and entertaining detail of the military operations, both there and in the West Indies, to the end of the war; together with two subsequent campaigns against the Indians."

The Critical Review, or Annals of Literature, London, 1773, in a brief notice of the work, says: "The history presents us with no new information; but we believe the facts are in general authenticated, and such readers as are desirous of perusing a detail of the war in America, may find it fully related in this work."

There might be nothing in the history new to this critic, who had consulted other writers on the subject; his acknowledgment, therefore, of its authenticity, is the more valuable.

Maj. Mante often alludes to the services of Rogers, and always with the highest approbation. For instance, he says: "Capt. Robert Rogers, of the New Hampshire regiment, a person well acquainted with the woods of North America, and with the Indians in the interest of the English, having by this time [Sept. 1755] joined Gen. Johnson, he was ordered on different scouts to discover the number of the enemy, and how they were employed."

The author concludes the work as follows:

"Thus have we brought down to the time proposed

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the history which we engaged to give the public. But we cannot take leave of the generous encouragers of this undertaking, without expressing our grateful acknowledgments for the journals and plans communicated to us by many general and other respectable officers, employed on the different services which we have related. The only merit we pretend to in this compilation, is our having strictly adhered to that impartiality which ought to be the first consideration of every historian."

I will here take a passing notice of the "Life of Israel Putnam," by Oliver W. B. Peabody, published at New York, in 1839. This work is no more than a varnished copy of that of Col. Humphreys. The author says: "His [Putnam's] biography has been already written by a friend and fellow-soldier, who gathered from his own lips a portion of his history; and we shall freely avail ourselves of the materials which have been thus collected, in connection with such as have been gained from other sources." The whole story, however, had been fully told. Humphreys had gleaned from the general all that his fertile memory could furnish; and there alone his history was to be found. The annals of the French war, as well as those of the American revolution, were extremely deficient in respect to the achievements of Putnam; insomuch, that the work of Humphreys was undertaken avowedly to "rescue *from oblivion* the actions of that distinguished veteran."

The work of Mr. Peabody, however, is written in far better style than its prototype; it is the gilded pill, which lessens somewhat the aversion to the medicine.

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And the biography of Putnam, in the dress it now has, and in the company with which it is associated, has a fair chance to descend down to the latest posterity. It is stereotyped, and incorporated with the lives of the most eminent American worthies, in Professor Sparks' "Library of American Biography," being written, it is believed, expressly for that work; and of which a London edition is issued simultaneously with that of the American.—The publication is justly held in the highest estimation, being conducted by a gentleman of first-rate abilities; but that the military character of Gen. Putnam, which is the only claim that can be urged in his favor, entitled his name to a place in it, is, in the opinion of some persons, a little problematical.

That discrepancies in histories of the same events by different authors should occur, is not surprising when we consider how difficult it is even in courts of justice to elicit the truth: the conflicting testimony adduced arising from the same transactions striking witnesses differently, or from prejudice in favor of or against one of the parties in contention. So with the writers of history, the difficulty of obtaining a true statement of facts, originating from the same causes, added to the national or party prejudices of the authors themselves, will naturally lead to representations variant and contradictory.

Besides, many historians are in the habit of interlarding their narrations with their own conceptions of what might, or ought, in their opinion, to have taken place; which they give as actual occurrences. Thus in ancient history we are entertained with long harangues of generals to their armies, before the means of transmitting

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them to posterity were known. I admire the frankness of Mr. Botta on this head. In a note to the reader, prefixed to his "History of the American war of Independence," he says: "There will be found, in the course of this history, several discourses of a certain length. Those I have put in the mouth of the different speakers have *really been pronounced by them*, and upon those very occasions which are treated of in the work. I should, however, mention that I have sometimes made a single orator say what has been said in substance by others of the same party. Sometimes, also, but rarely, using the liberty, *granted in all times to historians*, I have ventured to add a small number of phrases, which appeared to me to coincide perfectly with the sense of the orator, and proper to enforce his opinion."

In accordance with the principle here avowed, Mr. Botta, in treating of the Bunker Hill battle, observes: "It was during the retreat that Dr. Warren received his death. Finding the corps he commanded hotly pursued by the enemy, despising all danger, he stood alone before the ranks, endeavoring to rally his troops, and to encourage them by his own example. He reminded them of the mottoes inscribed on their ensigns; on the one side of which were these words, '*An appeal to Heaven;*' and on the other, '*Qui transtulit, sustinet;*' meaning, that the same providence which brought their ancestors, through so many perils, to a place of refuge, would also deign to support their descendants."*

* Col. Humphreys speaks of a standard containing the above armorial bearings, which, he says, had been sent from Connecticut, for the use of the troops from that province; and from him doubtless Mr. Botta obtained his information.

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Now this is a sheer fiction of the historian; nothing of the kind occurred. Dr. Warren had no command on the occasion, and it is most probable fell within the redoubt. At any rate, after the Americans had expended all their ammunition, and of course were under the necessity of quitting the fortifications, it would have been madness, by descanting upon the mottoes inscribed on their banners, to attempt to rally them to breast the balls and bayonets of the enemy in the open field. *Sauve qui peut*, "Save himself who can," was the only command, or exhortation to be given at this time.

Mr. Botta had before said: "The provincials, destitute of bayonets, defended themselves valiantly with the but-end of their muskets. But the redoubt being already full of enemies, the American general [Col. Prescott] gave the signal of retreat, and drew off his men."

How far Col. Humphreys, in his Life of Gen. Putnam, has indulged his own fancy in the narration, is for the reader to judge.

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THE VEIL REMOVED, ETC.

CHAPTER I.

Col. Humphreys addressed his essay, in manuscript, to the State Society of the Cincinnati in Connecticut, covered in a letter to the president thereof, dated June 4, 1788; and arrangements were doubtless made at the approaching anniversary of the society, July 4th, for its publication.

It is not proposed to give a regular review of the work, but to select the most striking and important passages thereof, and make such strictures on them as may be deemed appropriate. The first extract taken commences at page twelve of the Boston edition of 1818.

The numerous errors and falsehoods relative to the birth and achievements of Major-general Putnam, which have (at a former period) been circulated with assiduity on both sides of the Atlantic, and the *uncertainty which appeared to prevail with respect to his real character*, first produced the resolution of writing this essay on his life, and induced the editor to obtain* materials from that hero himself. If communications of such authenticity, if personal intimacy as an aid-de-camp to that general, or if subsequent military employments, which afforded access to sources† of intelligence not open to others,

* The editor seizes with eagerness an opportunity of acknowledging his obligations to Dr. Albigence Waldo, who was so obliging as to commit to writing many anecdotes, communicated to him by Gen. Putnam in the course of the present year, [1788.]

† A multitude of proofs might be produced to demonstrate that military facts cannot always be accurately known but by the commander-in-chief and his confidential officers.

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give the writer any advantages, the unbiassed mind will decide how far they exculpate him from the imputations of that officiousness, ignorance, and presumption, which, in others, have been reprehended with severity. He only wishes that a premature and unfavorable construction may not be formed of his motive or object. Should this essay have any influence in correcting mistakes, or *rescuing from oblivion* the actions of that distinguished veteran; should it create an emulation to copy his domestic, manly, and heroic virtues; or should it prompt some more skilful hand to portray the illustrious group of patriots, sages, and heroes, who have guided our councils, fought our battles, and adorned the memorable epocha of independence, it will be an ample compensation for the trouble, and excite a consolatory reflection through every vicissitude of life.

In regard to what the author says respecting military facts not being always known but by the commander-in-chief, I will observe, that the acts of principal officers engaged in military transactions, must be sufficiently notorious to establish the degree of merit to which they are entitled. The acts of a major-general especially must become so well known to the intelligent part of the public, as to enable it to form a due estimate of his claims to approbation; and these will be recorded in history.

There is, however, an apology for the author's attempt to *rescue from oblivion the actions* of Putnam, in the early part of his military career, when serving in the French, or Seven Years' War. For, in fact, no history, including the transactions of that war, that I have consulted, alludes, in any manner whatever, to his exploits, nor even mentions his name, the journal of Major Rogers alone excepted;* and Rogers, as Mr. Peabody justly observes, "rarely notices him, and never with any comment indicating that the least importance

* Since writing the above, I find that Mante states the fact of Putnam's being made a prisoner, without the least allusion, however, to his prowess on that occasion.

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was attached by the author to his services." It is evident then, that, had it not been for his biographer, Gen. Putnam would have acquired no distinction for his achievements, whatever they may have been, during that warfare.

Israel Putnam, who, through a regular gradation of promotion, became the senior major-general in the army of the United States, was born at Salem, in the province (now state) of Massachusetts, on the 7th day of January, 1718. His father, Capt. Joseph Putnam, was the son of Mr. John Putnam, who, with two brothers, came from the south of England, and were among the first settlers of Salem.

To compensate partially for the deficiency of education (though nothing can remove or counterbalance the inconveniencies experienced from it in public life) he derived from his parents the source of innumerable advantages in the stamina of a vigorous constitution. Nature, liberal in bestowing on him bodily strength, hardiness, and activity, was by no means parsimonious in mental endowments. While we leave the qualities of the understanding to be developed in the process of life, it may not be improper, in this place, to designate some of the circumstances which were calculated to distinguish him afterwards as a partisan officer.

Courage, enterprise, activity, and perseverance were the first characteristics of his mind.

His disposition was as frank and generous as his mind was fearless and independent. He disguised nothing; indeed he seemed incapable of disguise. Perhaps in the intercourse he was ultimately obliged to have with an artful world, his sincerity, on some occasions, outwent his discretion. Although he had too much suavity in his nature to commence a quarrel, he had too much sensibility not to feel, and too much honor not to resent an intended insult. The first time he went to Boston he was insulted for his rusticity by a boy of twice his size and age; after bearing the sarcasms until his patience was worn out, he challenged, engaged, and vanquished his unmannerly antagonist, to the great diversion of a crowd of spectators. While a stripling, his ambition was to perform the labor of a man, and to excel in athletic diversions. In that rude, but masculine age, whenever the

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village-youth assembled on their usual occasions of festivity, pitching the bar, running, leaping, and wrestling were favorite amusements. At such gymnastic exercises (in which, during the heroic times of ancient Greece and Rome, conquest was considered as the promise of future military fame) he bore the palm from almost every ring.

In the year 1739 he removed from Salem to Pomfret, an inland fertile town in Connecticut, forty miles east of Hartford: having here purchased a considerable tract of land he applied himself successfully to agriculture.

The first years, on a new farm, are not however exempt from disasters and disappointments, which can only be remedied by stubborn and patient industry. Our farmer, sufficiently occupied in building a house and barn, felling woods, making fences, sowing grain, planting orchards, and taking care of his stock, had to encounter, in turn, the calamities occasioned by drought in summer, blast in harvest, loss of cattle in winter, and the desolation of his sheep-fold by wolves. In one night he had seventy fine sheep and goats killed, besides many lambs and kids wounded. This havoc was committed by a she-wolf, which, with her annual whelps, had for several years infested the vicinity. The young were commonly destroyed by the vigilance of the hunters, but the old one was too sagacious to come within reach of gunshot: upon being closely pursued she would generally fly to the western woods, and return the next winter with another litter of whelps.

It is objected, that a single wolf could not possibly catch and kill seventy sheep and goats, and wound many lambs and kids besides, in one night; and, moreover, that this number of sheep, for they must have composed the principal part of the flock, goats being rarely raised in Connecticut, was, at least, double the number usually kept, at the time alluded to, on the oldest farms; whereas Mr. Putnam had just commenced to cultivate a new one. There is, therefore, probably some mistake in the account here given; which might have arisen from Putnam's impediment of speech, seventeen being taken for seventy.

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This wolf at length became such an intolerable nuisance, that Mr. Putnam entered into a combination with five of his neighbors to hunt alternately until they could destroy her. Two, by rotation, were to be constantly in pursuit. It was known, that, having lost the toes from one foot, by a steel trap, she made one track shorter than the other. By this vestige, the pursuers recognized, in a light snow, the route of this pernicious animal. Having followed her to Connecticut river and found she had turned back in a direct course towards Pomfret, they immediately returned, and by ten o'clock the next morning the bloodhounds had driven her into a den, about three miles distant from the house of Mr. Putnam. [*The next morning*, that is, of the day after the chase was commenced; in which the hunters made a tour of *eighty miles*, to and from the river, in a little more than one day and night.] The people soon collected with dogs, guns, straw, fire and sulphur to attack the common enemy. With this apparatus several unsuccessful efforts were made to force her from the den. The hounds came back badly wounded and refused to return. The smoke of blazing straw had no effect. Nor did the fumes of burnt brimstone, with which the cavern was filled, compel her to quit the retirement. Wearied with such fruitless attempts (which had brought the time to ten o'clock at night,) Mr. Putnam tried once more to make his dog enter, but in vain; he proposed to his negro man to go down into the cavern and shoot the wolf: the negro declined the hazardous service. Then it was that the master, angry at the disappointment, and declaring that he was ashamed to have a coward in his family, resolved himself to destroy the ferocious beast, lest she should escape through some unknown fissure of the rock.* His neighbors strongly remonstrated against the perilous enterprize: but he, *knowing that wild animals were intimidated by fire*, and having provided several strips of birch-bark, the only combustible material which he could obtain, that would afford light in this deep

* After appropriating the labor of this negro to his own benefit, it was ungenerous in Putnam to wish him to hazard his life also in an affair that could not be of the least possible advantage to himself. Mr. Putnam ought to have offered this poor fellow freedom, on condition of his killing the wolf; for in the way the latter was going on, she would soon destroy more than the amount of his value.

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and darksome cave, prepared for his descent. Having, accordingly, divested himself of his coat and waistcoat, and having a long rope fastened round his legs, by which he might be pulled back, at a concerted signal, he entered head foremost, with the blazing torch in his hand.

The aperture of the den, on the east side of a very high ledge of rocks, is about two feet square; from thence it descends obliquely fifteen feet, then running horizontally about ten more, it ascends gradually sixteen feet towards its termination. The sides of this subterraneous cavity are composed of smooth and solid rocks, which seem to have been divided from each other by some former earthquake. The top and bottom are also of stone, and the entrance, in winter, being covered with ice, is exceedingly slippery. It is in no place high enough for a man to raise himself upright, nor in any part more than three feet in width.

Having groped his passage to the horizontal part of the den, the most terrifying darkness appeared in front of the dim circle of light afforded by his torch. It was silent as the house of death. None but monsters of the desert had ever before explored this solitary mansion of horror. He, cautiously proceeding onward, came to the ascent; which he slowly mounted on his hands and knees until he discovered the glaring eyeballs of the wolf, who was sitting at the extremity of the cavern. Started at the sight of fire, she gnashed her teeth, and gave a sullen growl. As soon as he had made the necessary discovery, he kicked the rope as a signal for pulling him out. The people, at the mouth of the den, who had listened with painful anxiety, hearing the growling of the wolf, and supposing their friend to be in the most imminent danger, drew him forth with such celerity that his shirt was stripped over his head and his skin severely lacerated. After he had adjusted his clothes, and loaded his gun with *nine** buck-shot, holding a torch in one hand and the musket in the other, he descended the second time. When he drew nearer than before, the wolf, assuming a still more fierce and terrible appearance, howling, rolling her eyes, snapping her teeth, and dropping her head between

* Nine is a cabalistic, sacred number, and it was doubtless believed, that a musket thus charged would be sure to take effect.

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her legs, was evidently in the attitude, and on the point of springing at him. At the critical instant he levelled and fired at her head. Stunned with the shock, and suffocated with the smoke, he immediately found himself drawn out of the cave. But having refreshed himself, and permitted the smoke to dissipate, he went down the third time. Once more he came within sight of the wolf, who appearing very passive, he applied the torch to her nose, and perceiving her dead, he took hold of her ears, and then kicking the rope (still tied round his legs) the people above with no small exultation dragged them both out together.

I have offered these facts in greater detail, because they contain a display of character; and because they have been erroneously related in several European publications, and very much mutilated in the History of Connecticut, a work as replete with falsehood as destitute of genius, lately printed in London.

The work, here alluded to, was written by the Rev. Mr. Peters, a clergyman of the English church, and a tory refugee, in the time of the American revolution. After his arrival in England, with the view of serving his majesty in the best way he could, he published a caricature of the people, among whom he had officiated as their spiritual guide, which he denominated a history of Connecticut.

As to the wonderful feat of Putnam, detailed above, more has probably been made of it than it is entitled to. The description of the den, in which the wolf took refuge, is said to be incorrect; that it is by no means so extensive as represented. It is thought, also, that it would be impossible to drag a man out from such a zigzag course by a rope tied to his legs, with the additional weight of a large wolf attached to him.

As this cavern has never been subjected to measurement, its supposed dimensions depending entirely upon the estimate made of it by Putnam; and as, in the peculiar circumstances in which he was placed, he would be very apt to form an erroneous opinion respecting it; and, moreover, when the penchant which some people

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have for the marvelous, and desire to enhance the dangers they have undergone, are taken into consideration, it is probable the objections are well founded.

After all, there was, perhaps, more cunning than courage exercised in this matter. Putnam *knew that wild animals were intimidated by fire;* and was therefore sensible that he did not run so great a hazard as his neighbors, ignorant of that fact, supposed. Upon the whole, I think it to be regretted that this wolf-story ever obtained publicity; particularly as it tends to assimilate the character of Putnam to that of the fabulous heroes of antiquity, whose career commenced with the destruction of ferocious beasts and chimerical monsters. Besides, there could have been no necessity for such a procedure, as the rope might be tied to the wolf and she dragged out by herself, while Putnam could crawl back in the same manner he entered.

As an apology, however, for the biographer, a writer observes, that—"Some European statement represented Putnam as having *strangled the wolf in his arms*, after having wounded him; (see Biographical Dictionary by John Gorton: London: article Putnam.) Showing the necessity of an accurate account of that affair." The same writer says: "Putnam was known in the French war, to the British officers, by the soubriquet of 'old wolf.'"

After writing the above, I accidentally, a few days since, met with an intelligent gentleman, of about sixty years of age, a native of Pomfret, and of course conversant with the Putnam wolf-story; which he said was a real fact; that Putnam did actually kill the wolf in manner and form as stated. The cave, he said, was situated on the side of a hill, about *fifteen feet* in extent, somewhat large at the opening, then more narrow for a short distance, when it forms an area in which a man can stand erect. Here the wolf had taken up her domicil. He had frequent conversations with Putnam's negro, Dick, who was present at this famous affair, and

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acknowledged that Putnam requested him to enter the cave, which he declined.

I asked the gentleman if he had ever read Col. Humphrey's account of this matter. He replied, that he did not recollect having done so; and when I detailed to him the statement of Col. Humphreys he was astonished, and pronounced it untrue.

Prosperity, at length, began to attend the agricultural affairs of Mr. Putnam. He was acknowledged to be a skilful and indefatigable manager.

But the time had now arrived which was to turn the instruments of husbandry into weapons of hostility, and to exchange the hunting of wolves, who had ravaged the sheepfolds, for the pursuit after savages, who had desolated the frontiers. Mr. Putnam was about thirty-seven years old, when the war between England and France, which preceded the last, broke out in America. His reputation must have been favorably known to the government, since among the first troops that were levied by Connecticut, in 1755, he was appointed to the command of a company in Lyman's regiment of provincials. I have mentioned his age at this period expressly to obviate a prevalent opinion, that he was far advanced in life when he commenced his military service.

As he was extremely popular, he found no difficulty in enlisting his complement of recruits from the most hardy, enterprising, and respectable young men of his neighborhood. The regiment joined the army, at the opening of the campaign, not far distant from Crown Point. Soon after his arrival at camp, he became intimately acquainted with the famous partisan captain, afterwards Major Rogers, with whom he was frequently [twice] associated in traversing the wilderness, reconnoitering the enemy's lines, gaining intelligence, and taking straggling prisoners, as well as in beating up the quarters and surprising the advanced pickets of their army. For these operations a corps of rangers was formed from the irregulars.

This is a mistake. No corps of rangers was formed from the irregular or provincial troops: they were enlisted, chiefly in New Hampshire, for the express ser-

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vice to which they were assigned. Putnam never belonged to this corps; although, upon a few occasions, he with provincial troops, as also regular English soldiers, were detached to accompany it, when too weak in numbers for the service required. In the summer of 1757, in consequence of the mortality among the rangers by small-pox, fifty-two volunteers from the regular troops, as before observed, were directed by Lord Loudoun to be trained by Major Rogers for the ranging service. But there is not a single instance, mentioned by Rogers in his journal, of irregular or provincial troops being enlisted into the corps of rangers.

The first time Rogers and Putnam were detached with a party of these light troops, it was the fortune of the latter to preserve, with his own hand, the life of the former.

The object of this expedition was to obtain an accurate knowledge of the position and state of the works at Crown Point. It was impracticable to approach with their party near enough for this purpose, without being discovered. Alone, the undertaking was sufficiently hazardous, on account of the swarms of hostile Indians who infested the woods. Our two partisans, however, left all their men at a convenient distance, with strict orders to continue concealed until their return. Having thus cautiously taken their arrangements, they advanced with the profoundest silence in the evening; and lay, during the night, contiguous to the fortress. Early in the morning they approached so close as to be able to give satisfactory information to the general who had sent them, on the several points to which their attention had been directed; but Captain Rogers, being at a little distance from Captain Putnam, fortuitously met a stout Frenchman, who instantly seized his fusee with one hand, and with the other attempted to stab him, while he called to an adjacent guard for assistance. The guard answered. Putnam, perceiving the imminent danger of his friend, and that no time was to be lost, or further alarm given by firing, ran rapidly to them, while they were yet struggling, and with the but-end of his piece laid the French-

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man dead at his feet. The partisans, to elude pursuit, precipitated their flight, joined the party, and returned without loss to the encampment.

This is a plain story, which from its brevity could hardly admit of erors in the detail. If Colonel Humphreys had the relation from Gen. Putnam, it ought to be true to the letter; yet Mr. Peabody, as though it were a part of a romance, that might be suited to the taste of the writer, makes variations as to matters of fact; non-essential, to be sure, any further than tending to cast a doubt on the validity of Col. Humphreys' original statement. He says:—"They [Rogers and Putnam] left their men concealed behind a willow thicket, and went themselves sufficiently near the works to procure the information they desired. It was now about the hour of sunrise, when the soldiers began to issue in such numbers from the fort, that the partisans found no opportunity to rejoin their men without detection. In the course of an hour or two, a soldier came directly to the spot where Rogers *lay concealed* at a little distance from Putnam," &c., p. 116. Mr. Peabody, it appears, had perused the journal of Maj. Rogers, and, it would seem, has borrowed some of the circumstances detailed in his official report of this affair, which is as follows:

"October 21, 1755.—I had orders from Gen. Johnson of this date, to embark for Crown Point, with a party of four men, in quest of a prisoner. At night we landed on the west side of Lake George, twenty-five miles from the English camp. The remainder of the way we marched by land, and the 26th we came in sight of the fort. In the evening we approached nearer, and next morning found ourselves within about 300 yards of it. My men lay concealed in a thicket of willows, while I crept somewhat nearer, to a large pine log, where I concealed myself by holding bushes in my hand. Soon after sunrise the soldiers issued out in such numbers, that my men and I could not possi-

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bly join each other without a discovery. About 10 o'clock a single man marched out directly towards our ambush. When I perceived him within ten yards of me, I sprung over the log, and met him and offered him quarters, which he refused, and made a pass at me with a dirk, which I avoided, and presented my fusee to his breast; but notwithstanding, he still pushed on with resolution, and obliged me to despatch him. This gave an alarm, and made it necessary for us to hasten to the mountain. I arrived safe at our camp the 30th, with all my party."

I leave it to Mr. Peabody to reconcile the disagreement in the two statements. I confess, I can make no comment that would throw the least light upon the subject. If Rogers' account is entitled to credit, which, I believe, will not be disputed, Col. Humphreys must have wofully misunderstood the communication made to him of this transaction.

The time for which the colonial troops engaged to serve terminated with the campaign. Putnam was reappointed, and again took the field in 1756.

Few are so ignorant of war as not to know, that military adventures, in the night, are always extremely liable to accidents. Captain Putnam, having been commanded to reconnoiter the enemy's camp at *the Ovens* near *Ticonderoga*, took the brave Lieut. Robert Durkee as his companion. In attempting to execute these orders, he narrowly missed being taken himself in the first instance, and killing his friend in the second. It was customary for the British and provincial troops to place their fires round their camp, which frequently exposed them to the enemy's scouts and patroles. A contrary practice, then unknown in the English army, prevailed among the French and Indians. The plan was much more rational; they kept their fires in the center, lodged their men circularly at a distance, and posted their sentinels in the surrounding darkness. Our partisans approached the camp, and supposing the sentries were within the circle of fires, crept upon their hands and knees with the greatest possible caution, until, to their utter astonishment, they found

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themselves in the thickest of the enemy. The sentinels, discovering them, fired and slightly wounded Durkee in the thigh. He and Putnam had no alternative. They fled. The latter, being foremost, and scarcely able to see his hand before him, soon plunged into a clay pit. Durkee, almost at the identical moment, came tumbling after. Putnam by no means pleased at finding a companion, and believing him to be one of the enemy, lifted his tomahawk to give the deadly blow, when Durkee (who had followed so closely as to know him) inquired, whether he had escaped unhurt. Captain Putnam instantly recognizing his voice, dropped his weapon: and both, springing from the pit, made good their retreat to the neighboring ledges, amidst a shower of random shot. There they betook themselves to a large log, by the side of which they lodged the remainder of the night. Before they lay down, Captain Putnam said he had a little rum in his canteen, which could never be more acceptable or necessary; but on examining the canteen, which hung under his arm, he found the enemy had pierced it with their balls, and that there was not a drop of liquor left. The next day he found fourteen bullet holes in his blanket.

It is a little singular, that Capt. Putnam, while he and Lieut. Durkee started together in their flight, and both fell into a pit nearly at the same time, should have taken his companion for an enemy; the agitated state of his mind may, however, account for the mistake. The reader, at the first view of this statement, would be apt to conclude that the escape of Putnam unharmed upon this occasion, bordered somewhat upon the miraculous, supposing that fourteen separate balls had pierced his blanket, and one or more his canteen; but when it is considered, that his blanket was of course rolled up and slung upon his back, and therefore that one ball might have perforated it in as many places as stated, and at the same time passed through his canteen, the wonderment ceases; as it is not uncommon for the clothes of persons engaged in warfare to meet with the like accident without injury to the wearer.

In the same summer [1756] a body of the enemy, con-

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sisting of 600 men, attacked the baggage and provision wagons at a place called the Half-way-brook; it being equidistant from Fort Edward, and the south end of Lake George. Having killed the oxen and plundered the wagons, they retreated with their booty without having met with such resistance as might have been expected from the strength of the escort. General Webb, upon receiving intelligence of this disaster, ordered the Captains Putnam and Rogers "to take 100 volunteers in boats, with two wall-pieces and two blunderbusses, and to proceed down Lake George to a certain point; there to leave the batteaux under a proper guard, and thence to cross by land, so as to harass, and, if practicable, intercept the retreating enemy at the narrows." These orders were executed with so much punctuality, that the party arrived at the destined place half an hour before the hostile boats came in view. Here they waited, under cover, until the enemy (ignorant of these proceedings) entered the narrows with their batteaux loaded with plunder. Then the volunteers poured upon them volley after volley, killed many of the oarsmen, sunk a number of their batteaux, and would soon have destroyed the whole body of the enemy, had not the unusual precipitancy of their passage (favored by the wind) carried them through the narrows into the wide part of South Bay, where they were out of the reach of musket-shot. The shattered remnant of the little fleet soon arrived at Ticonderoga, and gave information that Putnam and Rogers were at the narrows. A fresh party was instantly detached to cut them in pieces, on their return to Fort Edward. Our partisans, sensible of the probability of such an attempt, and being full twenty miles from their boats, strained every nerve to reach them as soon as possible; which they effected the same night. Next day, when they had returned as far as Sabbath-Day Point, they discovered, on shore, the before-mentioned detachment of 300 men, who had passed them in the night, and who now, on perceiving our party, took to their boats with the greatest alacrity, and rowed out to give battle. They advanced in line, maintaining a good mien, and felicitating themselves upon the prospect of an easy conquest, from the great superiority of their numbers. Flushed with these expectations, they

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were permitted to come within pistol-shot before a gun was fired. At once, the wall-pieces and blunderbusses, which had been brought to rake them in the most vulnerable point, were discharged. As no such reception had been foreseen, the assailants were thrown into the utmost disorder. Their terror and confusion were greatly increased by a well-directed and most destructive fire of the small-arms. The larger pieces being reloaded, without annoyance, continued alternately with the musketry to make dreadful havoc, until the rout was completed, and the enemy driven back to Ticonderoga. In this action, one of the bark canoes contained twenty Indians, of whom fifteen were killed. Great numbers, from other boats, both of French and Indians, were seen to fall overboard; but the account of their total loss could never be ascertained. Rogers and Putnam had but one man killed, and two slightly wounded. They now landed on the point, and having refreshed their men at leisure, returned in good order to the British camp.

There seems to be no end to the blunders in this book of Col. Humphreys. In this case, the object of the expedition alluded to, the number of men composing it, and the name of the commanding general, by whose order it was undertaken, are misstated; and, moreover, the detail of nearly all the circumstances attending it, is incorrect in point of fact.

The author, it is seen, previously to giving the foregoing account, says:—"The time for which the colonial troops engaged to serve terminated with the campaign. Putnam was reappointed, and again took the field in 1756." And then follows the above statement of an affair which took place in November, 1755. This shows that Putnam kept no minutes of transactions that fell under his cognizance, or of which he had obtained imperfect accounts; and that, in this instance, he had forgotten even the year in which they occurred. Can a true history be expected from such a source?

The following is the official report of this affair by Major Rogers, who commanded the expedition, not

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Putnam and Rogers. The small party first sent out upon this occasion, was probably composed entirely of rangers; and of course Putnam was not among them, but was attached to the reinforcement sent to their aid.

I will in the first place introduce a short previous report, as tending to explain particularly the object of the expedition.

"October 15, 1755.—Agreeably to orders of this date from Gen. Johnson, I embarked with forty men in five boats. Our design was to discover the strength of the enemy's advance guard, and, if possible, to decoy the whole or part of them into an ambush; but though we were indefatigable in our endeavors for several days, yet all our attempts proved abortive; and, as an account of our several movements during this scout would little gratify the reader, I shall omit giving a particular detail of them. We returned safe to our encampment at Lake George on the 19th.

"November 4th, 1755.—Agreeably to orders from Gen. Johnson this day, I embarked for the enemy's advance guard, before-mentioned, with a party of 30 men, in four batteaux, mounted with two wall-pieces each. The next morning, a little before daylight, we arrived within half a mile of them, where we landed, and concealed our boats. I then sent out four men as spies, who returned the next evening, and informed me, that the enemy had no works round them, but lay entirely open to an assault; which advice I despatched immediately to the general, desiring a sufficient force to attack them; which, notwithstanding the general's earnestness and activity in the affair, did not arrive till we were obliged to retreat. On our return, however, we were met by a reinforcement, sent by the general, whereupon I returned towards the enemy, and the next evening sent two men to see if their sentries were alert, who approached so near as to be discovered and fired at by them, and were so closely pursued in their

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retreat, that unhappily our whole party was discovered. The first notice I had of this being the case, was from two canoes with thirty men in them, which I concluded came out with another party by land, in order to force us between two fires; to prevent which, I with Lieut. McCurdy and fourteen men, embarked in two boats, leaving the remainder of the party on shore, under the command of Capt. Putnam. In order to decoy the enemy within the reach of our wall-pieces, we steered as if we intended to pass by them, which luckily answered our expectations; for they boldly headed us till within about an hundred yards, when we discharged the before-mentioned pieces, which killed several of them, and put the rest to flight. We drove them near where our land party lay, and they were galled also by them. At this time I discovered their party by land, and gave our people notice of it, who thereupon embarked, without receiving any considerable injury from the enemy's fire, notwithstanding it was for some time very brisk upon them. We warmly pursued the enemy, and again got an opportunity to discharge our wall-pieces upon them. We continued the pursuit down the lake to their landing, where they were received and covered by 100 men, upon whom we discharged our wall-pieces, and obliged them to retire. But finding their number vastly superior to ours, we judged it most prudent to return to our encampment, at Lake George, where we safely arrived on the 8th of November."

The affair *at the Half-way-brook*, mentioned by Col. Humphreys above, happened nearly three years after the period at which he has placed it. Major Mante thus notices the occurrence:

"Whilst the intrenchments of Gen. Abercrombie enclosed him in security, M. de Montcalm exerted his usual activity in harassing the frontiers, and in detaching parties to attack the convoys of the English. On the 17th of July, 1758, one of these parties de-

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stroyed three provincial officers and upwards of twenty men, at *Half-way-brook;* and the 27th of the same month, one hundred and sixteen wagoners and sixteen rangers met with the same fate, between that place and Fort Edward. Major Rogers was then detached with a party of seven hundred men, in quest of the enemy; but they had the good fortune to escape him. On his return, he met an express from the general, with orders to proceed to South and East Bay, and return by Fort Edward. Whilst the major was pursuing the route prescribed him by these orders, he was attacked, on the 8th of August, near the spot where Fort St. Anne stood, by about 500 of the enemy, his own number being reduced to 530 men. But both he and his men behaved with so much spirit, that in an hour they broke the assailants, and obliged them to retreat. In this action there fell 190 of the French; and the English lost about 40, the missing included. Maj. Putnam and two lieutenants were made prisoners." (Page 158.)

Major Rogers gives a particular description of this expedition, in his journal, which will appear hereafter in its proper place. He and Mante fully agree in their statements; and, according to them, there is no propriety in the reflections cast upon the escort of the wagoners by Col. Humphreys. It is a little singular, that Gen. Putnam should have forgotten the cause of the expedition in which he was made a prisoner, and transferred it to an object entirely different, which happened long before.

THE RACE.

Soon after these rencounters, a singular kind of race was run by our nimble-footed provincial and an active young Frenchman. The liberty of each was by turns at stake. Gen. Webb, wanting a prisoner for the sake of intelligence, sent Captain Putnam with five men to procure one. The captain concealed himself near the road which leads from Ticonderoga to the Ovens. His men seemed fond of show-

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ing themselves, which unsoldierlike conduct he prohibited with the severest reprehension. This rebuke they imputed to unnecessary fear. They had not lain long, in the high grass, before a Frenchman and an Indian passed—the Indian was *considerably in advance.* As soon as the former had gone by, Putnam, relying on the fidelity of his men, sprang up, ran, and ordered them to follow. After running about thirty rods, he seized the Frenchman by the shoulders, and forced him to surrender. But his prisoner, looking round, perceiving no other enemy, and knowing the Indian would be ready in a moment to assist him, began to make an obstinate resistance. Putnam, finding himself betrayed by his men into a perilous dilemma, let go his hold, stepped back and snapped his piece, which was leveled at the Frenchman's breast. It missed fire. Upon this he thought it most *prudent* to retreat. The Frenchman, in turn, chased him back to his men, who, at last, raised themselves from the grass; which his pursuer espying in good time for himself, made his escape. Putnam, mortified that these men had frustrated his success, dismissed them with disgrace; and not long after accomplished his object.

Captain Putnam, upon this occasion, as the story is told, caught a real Tartar; who, not only unwilling to follow his captor, was inclined that the latter should accompany him; and Putnam, it seems, adopted the sage advice of Dogberry to his watch. But there must be some mistake in this matter. It is hardly possible to conceive, that General Putnam would give a narrative so discreditable to himself. The athletic, the brave Putnam, in the very prime and gristle of manhood, (thirty-eight years of age,) and who, if he had lived in Greece, in the time of Pythagoras, might with confidence have entered the lists at the Olympic games, is here made to truckle to a stripling, whom he had in his clutches, and might, one would think, have carried off upon his shoulders. But on his making resistance, Putnam endeavors to shoot him, and thereby deprive himself of the very object he had in view, that of ma-

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king a prisoner. Failing in this attempt, he takes to his heels, and the youngster after him.

The Indian, spoken of, *was considerably in advance*, and, it does not appear, knew any thing of what was going on. The Frenchman made no call upon him, which is a sufficient indication that they were not traveling together, nor knew of their proximity to each other. This story ought to be *expunged* from the book—it cannot be true.

Mr. Peabody has changed the phrase "considerably in advance," to "at a little distance," thereby rendering it more probable that the Indian would hear the bustle of the combatants, and turn back, to ascertain the cause. But he has no justification for taking this liberty with the original text.

The active services of Captain Putnam on every occasion attracted the admiration of the public, and induced the Legislature of Connecticut to promote him to a majority in 1757.

As no official document appears, showing any extraordinary *active services* of Captain Putnam, his promotion was probably in accordance with the usual custom of advancement in military rank, according to seniority of commission. Its immediate cause, in this case, was likely to have originated in a demand of an increase of provincial troops from Connecticut.

A few days before the siege, [of Fort William Henry,] Major Putnam, with two hundred men, escorted Gen. Webb from Fort Edward to Fort William Henry. The object was to examine the state of this fortification, which stood at the southern extremity of Lake George. Several *abortive attempts* having been made by *Major Rogers* and others in the *night season*, Major Putnam proposed to go down the lake *in open daylight*, land at Northwest Bay, and tarry on shore until he could make satisfactory discovery of the enemy's actual situation at Ticonderoga and the adjacent posts. The plan (which he suggested) of landing with only five men, and sending back the boats, to prevent detection, was deem-

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ed too hazardous by the general. At length, however, he was permitted to proceed with eighteen volunteers in three whale boats; but before he arrived at Northwest Bay, *he discovered a body of men on an island.* Immediately upon this, he left two boats *to fish* at a distance, that they might not occasion an alarm, and returned himself with the information. The general, seeing him rowing back with *great velocity*, in a single boat, concluded the others were captured, and sent a skiff, with orders for him *alone* to come on shore. After advising the general of the circumstances, he urged the expediency of returning to make further discoveries, and bring off the boats. Leave was *reluctantly* given. He found his people, and, passing still onward, discovered (by the aid of a good perspective glass) a large army in motion. By this time several of the advanced canoes had nearly surrounded him, but by the swiftness of his whale boats, *he escaped through the midst of them.* On his return he informed the general minutely of all he had seen, and intimated his conviction that the expedition must obviously be destined against Fort William Henry. That commander, strictly enjoining silence on the subject, directed him to put his men under an oath of secrecy, and to prepare, without loss of time, to return to the head-quarters of the army. Major Putnam observed, "he hoped his excellency did not intend to neglect so fair an opportunity of giving battle, should the enemy presume to land." "What do you think we should do here?" replied the general. Accordingly the next day he returned, and the day after Colonel Monroe was ordered from Fort Edward, with his regiment, to reinforce the garrison. That officer took with him all his rich baggage and camp equipage, notwithstanding Maj. Putnam's advice to the contrary. The day following his arrival, the enemy landed and besieged the place.

The Marquis de Montcalm, provided with a good train of artillery, meeting with no annoyance from the British army, and but inconsiderable interruption from the garrison, accelerated his approaches so rapidly, as to obtain possession of the fort in a short time after completing the investiture.

A very important affair is here attempted to be made up out of very small materials. Of what use was the

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discovery of a few men upon an island? No advantage was taken of it, notwithstanding Major Putnam's great haste to come back with the news. The report he gave of the dangerous situation in which he had imprudently left two of his boats, caused the general *reluctantly* to grant him liberty to return for them. Putnam, however, with his usual good fortune, *escaped through the midst of the enemy's canoes.*

The assertion that Major Rogers made abortive attempts to gain information of the condition of the enemy, at their different stations, by reason of making his excursions in the *night season;* and that it was reserved for the brave and sagacious Putnam to undertake an expedition for that purpose, *in open daylight,* is too ridiculous for comment. It would require the eyes of an owl, to take surveys of the enemy's positions and fortifications in the night. Rogers, with his rangers, in his fatiguing scouts, traveled day and night, in all seasons of the year, and made reasonable, and, no doubt, correct reports to the commanding generals of his discoveries.

There is such a resemblance in several circumstances contained in the foregoing statement of Colonel Humphreys, to those in the following official reports of Major Rogers, that I am induced to insert them. The expedition, according to Rogers, it will be perceived, took place nearly two years before the time allotted to it by Humphreys, Fort William Henry not being taken till August, 1757. It will be recollected that Rogers published his journal in 1765, and that Humphreys' Life of Putnam did not appear till 1788.

"November 10, 1755. Pursuant to orders I received this day from Gen. Johnson, in order to discover the enemy's strength and situation at Ticonderoga, I proceeded on the scout with a party of ten men on the 12th instant; and on the 14th I arrived within view of the fort at that place, and found they had erected three new barracks and four storehouses in the fort; between

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which and the water they had eighty batteaux hauled upon the beach, and about fifty tents near the fort. They appeared to be very busy at work. Having by these discoveries answered the design of our march, we returned, arriving at our encampment the 19th.

"December 19, 1755. Having had a month's repose, I proceeded, agreeably to orders from Gen. Johnson, with *two men*, once more to reconnoiter the French at Ticonderoga. [*Eighteen volunteers*, on account of the great hazard to be encountered, were deemed requisite by the general for a like scout under Putnam.] In our way *we discovered a fire upon an island*, adjacent to the route we took, *which, as we supposed, had been kindled by some of the enemy who were there.* [Rogers did not return back to inform the general of this mighty discovery.] This obliged us to lie by, and *act like fishermen*, in order to deceive them till night came on, when we retired to the west side of the lake, fifteen miles north of our fort. Here concealing our boat, the 20th we pursued our march by land, and on the 21st, at noon, [*open daylight*] were in sight of the French fort; where we found their people still deeply engaged at work; and discovered four pieces of cannon mounted on the southeast bastion; two at the northwest towards the woods, and two on the south. By what I judged, the number of their troops was about five hundred. I made several attempts to take a prisoner, by waylaying their paths; but they always passed in numbers vastly superior to mine, and thereby disappointed me. We approached very near their fort by night, and were driven by the cold, which was now very severe, to take shelter in one of their evacuated huts. Before day there was a fall of snow, which obliged us with all possible speed to march homeward, lest the enemy should perceive our tracks and pursue us.

"We found our boat in safety, and had the good fortune, after being almost exhausted with hunger, cold, and fatigue, to kill two deer, with which being refresh-

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ed, on the 24th, we returned to Fort William Henry, a fortress erected in this year's campaign, at the south end of Lake George."

Major Rogers' reports are modest, plain narratives of facts, without any ostentatious displays of extraordinary courage or hair-breadth escapes.

Not long after this misfortune, [capture of Fort William Henry,] Gen. Lyman succeeded to the command of Fort Edward. He resolved to strengthen it. For this purpose one hundred and fifty men were employed in cutting timber. To cover them, Capt. Little was posted (with fifty British regulars) at the head of a thick swamp about one hundred rods eastward of the fort—to which his communication lay over a tongue of land, formed on the one side by the swamp, and by a creek on the other.

One morning, at daybreak, a sentinel saw indistinctly several birds, as he conceived, come from the swamp and fly over him with incredible swiftness. While he was ruminating on these wonderful birds, and endeavoring to form some idea of their color, shapes and size, an arrow buried itself in the limb of a tree just above his head. He now discovered the quality and design of these winged messengers of fate, and gave the alarm. Instantly the working party began to retreat along the defile. A large body of savages had concealed themselves in the morass before the guard was posted, and were attempting in this way to kill the sentinel without noise, with the design to surprise the whole party. Finding the alarm given, they rushed from the covert, shot and tomahawked those who were nearest at hand, and pressed hard on the remainder of the unarmed fugitives. Capt. Little flew to their relief, and, by pouring on the Indians a well-timed fire, checked the pursuit, and enabled such of the fatigue-men as did not fall in the first onset, to retire to the fort. Thither he sent for assistance, his little party being almost overpowered by numbers. But the commandant, imagining that the main body of the enemy were approaching for a general assault, called in his out-posts and shut the gates.

Maj. Putnam lay, with *his rangers*, on an island adjacent to the fort. Having heard the musquetry, and learned that

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his friend Capt. Little was in the utmost peril, he *plunged into the river* at the head of his corps, and waded through the water towards the place of engagement. This brought him so near to the fort, that Gen. Lyman, apprized of his design, and unwilling that the lives of a few more brave men should be exposed to what he deemed inevitable destruction, mounted the parapet and ordered him to proceed no further. The major only took time to make the best short apology he could, and marched on. *This is the only instance in the whole course of his military service wherein he did not pay the strictest obedience to orders;* and in this instance his motive was highly commendable. But when such conduct, even if sanctified by success, is passed over with impunity, it demonstrates that all is not right in the military system. In a disciplined army, such as that of the United States became under Gen. Washington, an officer guilty of a slighter violation of orders, however elevated in rank or meritorious in service, would have been brought before the bar of a court martial. Were it not for the seductive tendency of a brave man's example, I might have been spared the mortification of making these remarks on the conduct of an officer, *whose distinguishing characteristics were promptitude for duty and love of subordination, as well as cheerfulness to encounter every specics of difficulty and danger.*

The *rangers of Putnam* soon opened their way for a junction with the little handful of regulars, who still obstinately maintained their ground. By his advice the whole rushed impetuously with shouts and huzzas into the swamp. The savages fled on every side, and were chased, with no inconsiderable loss on their part, as long as the daylight lasted. On ours only one man was killed in the pursuit. His death was immediately revenged by that of the Indian who shot him. This Indian was one of the runners—a chosen body of active young men, who are made use of not only to procure intelligence and convey tidings, but also to guard the rear on a retreat.

The foregoing is a private anecdote, no historian taking the least notice of it. The absolute misstatements, known to be contained in it, naturally lead to the conjecture that others may have occurred. These

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misstatements are, in the first place, the connecting of Putnam with the corps of rangers, of which he was no more a member than his biographer. Secondly, the assertion, that this, if it actually happened, was the only instance in which Putnam disobeyed the orders of a superior officer. He neglected to obey the orders of Gen. Washington more than once, and upon one occasion absolutely refused, as will appear hereafter; which caused Washington to write to him as follows: "That you may not *hesitate* about complying with this order, you are to consider it as *peremptory, and not to be dispensed with.* * * * I could wish that in future my orders may be *immediately complied with*, without arguing upon the propriety of them. If any accident ensues from obeying them, *the fault* will be *upon me* and not *upon you.*"

The daring of Putnam, according to his biographer, seems to have frightened all the generals out of their senses, for fear his chivalrous adventures should cause the sacrifice of half the army. It is a fact, however, that very few men were ever lost under his immediate command. But that Gen. Lyman should be so weak as to suppose a scout of Indians, sent ahead of an army to examine the condition of an enemy's post, should attack a few fatigue-men, adjacent to a fortification intended to be assaulted, is not credible. Scouts upon such occasions are ordered to reconnoiter an enemy's works with the utmost caution, to prevent being discovered, and then to return to the army and make their report.

It is likely, in this case, that Maj. Putnam was not in fair hailing distance of the fort when he passed it, and in the confusion mistook the orders of the general, which doubtless were for him to hasten on to the support of Little as fast as possible.

The attempt here made to elevate a subaltern officer at the expense of his superior, does not appear to be supported by the least probability of truth. Gen. Ly-

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man's character as a general officer stands unimpeached. ." In 1755 he was appointed commander-in-chief of the Connecticut forces, and held this post with much distinction till the conclusion of the Canadian war." (Davenport, Biog.)

In the winter of 1757, when Col. Haviland was commandant at Fort Edward, the barracks adjoining to the northwest bastion took fire. They extended within twelve feet of the magazine, which contained three hundred barrels of powder. On its first discovery, the fire raged with great violence. The commandant endeavored, in vain, by discharging some pieces of heavy artillery against the supporters of this flight of barracks, to level them with the ground. Putnam arrived from the island where he was stationed at the moment when the blaze approached that end which was contiguous to the magazine. Instantly a vigorous attempt was made to extinguish the conflagration. A way was opened by a postern gate to the river, and the soldiers were employed in bringing water; which he, having mounted on a ladder to the eaves of the building, received and threw upon the flame. It continued, notwithstanding their utmost efforts, to gain upon them. He stood, enveloped in smoke, so near the sheet of fire, that a pair of thick blanket mittens were burnt entirely from his hands; he was supplied with another pair dipt in water. Col. Haviland, fearing that he would perish in the flames, called to him to come down. But he entreated that he might be suffered to remain, since destruction must inevitably ensue if their exertions should be remitted. The gallant commandant, not less astonished than charmed at the boldness of his conduct, forbade any more effects to be carried out of the fort, animated the men to redoubled diligence, and exclaimed, "If we must be blown up, we will go all together." At last, when the barracks were seen to be tumbling, Putnam descended, placed himself at the interval, and continued from an incessant rotation of replenished buckets to pour water upon the magazine. The outside planks were already consumed by the proximity of the fire, and as only one thickness of timber intervened, the trepidation now became general and extreme. Putnam, still undaunted, covered with a cloud of cinders, and scorched with the intensity of the heat, main-

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tained his position until the fire subsided, and the danger was wholly over. He had contended for one hour and a half with that terrible element. His legs, his thighs, his arms, and his face were blistered; and when he pulled off his second pair of mittens, the skin from his hands and fingers followed them. It was a month before he recovered. The commandant, to whom his merits had before endeared him, could not stifle the emotions of gratitude, due to the man who had been so instrumental in preserving the magazine, the fort, and the garrison.

It is somewhat singular that none of the historians who have treated of this war, should have taken a passing notice of so notable a circumstance as is here related. It would have been a terrible misfortune, had the magazine of this important post been blown up; which, it seems, by this account, was saved by the superior prowess and untiring perseverance of one man. History, however, is silent on the subject, and, perhaps, it would have been as well if Col. Humphreys had followed the example; or, at least, given the description of the affair in a less romantic style. When historical facts are mixed up with the wonderful, it leads to a suspicion that the whole is a fabrication.

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CHAPTER II.

THE repulse before Ticonderoga took place in 1758. Gen. Abercrombie, the British commander-in-chief in America, conducted the expedition. His army, which amounted to nearly sixteen thousand regulars and provincials, was amply supplied with artillery and military stores. This well-appointed corps passed over Lake George, and landed, without opposition, at the point of destination. The troops advanced in columns. Lord Howe, *having Maj. Putnam with him*, was in front of the center. A body of *about five hundred men*, (the advance or pickets of the French army,) which had fled at first, began to skirmish with our left. "Putnam," said Lord Howe, "what means that firing?" "I know not, but with your lordship's leave will see," replied the former. "I will accompany you," rejoined the gallant young nobleman. In vain did Maj. Putnam attempt to dissuade him by saying—"My lord, if I am killed, the loss of my life will be of little consequence, but the preservation of yours is of infinite importance to this army." The only answer was—"Putnam, your life is as dear to you as mine is to me; I am determined to go." One hundred of the van, under Maj. Putnam, filed off with Lord Howe. They soon met the left flank of the enemy's advance, by whose first fire his lordship fell.—It was a loss indeed; and particularly felt in the operations which occurred three days afterwards. His manners and his virtues had made him the idol of the army. Nothing could be more calculated to inspire men with the rash animation of rage, or to temper it with the cool perseverance of revenge, than the sight of such a hero, so beloved, fallen in his country's cause. It had the effect. *Putnam's party, having cut their way obliquely through the enemy's ranks*, and having been joined by Capt. D'Ell, with *twenty men*, together with some other *small parties*, charged them so furiously in

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rear, that *nearly three hundred were killed on the spot*, and one hundred and forty-eight made prisoners. In the mean time, from the unskilfulness of the guides, some of our columns were bewildered. The left wing, seeing Putnam's party in their front, advancing over the *dead bodies* towards them, commenced a brisk and heavy fire, which killed a serjeant and several privates. Nor could they, by sounds or signs, be convinced of their mistake, until Maj. Putnam, *preferring* (if heaven had thus ordained it) *the loss of his own life* to the loss of the lives of his brave associates, ran through the midst of the *flying balls*, and prevented the impending catastrophe.

I will here, in this stage of the history, give abstracts from the accounts of Mante and Marshall of this expedition.

An abstract of Major Mante's account of the expedition against Ticonderoga, in 1758:

"The army being formed into four columns, and ordered to march, they soon came to an encampment that had been occupied by the advanced guard of the enemy, consisting of three pickets of the regiment of Guienne, and deserted by them on the approach of the English; but not till they had destroyed their ammunition and provisions, and set fire to their camp.

"The woods being very thick, and impassable, with any regularity, to such a body of men, and the guides unskilful, the troops were bewildered, and the columns broke, falling in one upon another. During this disorder, *Lord Howe, at the head of the right center column, supported by the light infantry*, fell in with about *five hundred French*, who had likewise lost themselves in the woods."

The author here gives an account of the skirmish, and the loss sustained by the enemy, and adds: "But this advantage was too inconsiderable to counterbalance the loss of Lord Howe, who, almost at the beginning of the action, received a musket ball in the breast, of which he instantly expired. The want of guides in a

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country so circumstanced as to render the regular motion even of a small party extremely difficult, must greatly embarrass that of a large army. Accordingly, the total ignorance of the ground on which this skirmish happened, together with the early death of Lord Howe, caused such confusion amongst the English, that *the whole benefit of this little success was confined to that of occupying the ground upon which it was obtained, the night after.*"

From Marshall's introduction to his Life of Washington, vol. 1., p. 432:

"The expedition against Ticonderoga and Crown Point was conducted by Gen. Abercrombie in person. Having assembled his forces in the neighborhood, he embarked them at Lake George on board one hundred and twenty-five whale boats and nine hundred batteaux. His army consisted of near sixteen thousand effectives, of whom about nine thousand were provincials. It was attended by a very formidable train of artillery, and every requisite for the success of the enterprise. The pieces designed to cover their landing were mounted on rafts.

"Early the next morning they reached the landing place, which was in a cove on the west side of the lake leading to the advanced guard of the enemy, composed of one battalion, posted in a logged camp, when a debarkation was effected without opposition. The troops were immediately formed into four columns, *the British in the center*, and *the provincials on the flanks*, in which order they marched towards the advanced guard of the French. On their approach, the enemy, who were not in force to oppose them, destroyed whatever was in their power, and deserting their camp made a precipitate retreat.

"Abercrombie continued his march towards Ticonderoga with the intention of investing the place; but the woods being very thick, and the guides unskilful, the columns were thrown into confusion, and in some

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measure entangled with each other. In this situation, Lord Howe, at the head of the right center column, fell in with a part of the advanced guard of the enemy, which, in retreating from Lake George, was likewise lost in the woods. He immediately attacked and dispersed them; *killing several*, and taking one hundred and forty-eight prisoners, among whom were five officers and three cadets.

"This small advantage was purchased at a very dear rate; though only two officers on the side of the British were killed: one of these was Lord Howe himself, who fell on the first fire. This gallant young nobleman had endeared himself to the whole army, and was universally bewailed."

Mante says the troops were formed into four columns, the *British* in the *center*, and the *provincials on the flanks*. And Marshall says *Lord Howe* was at the head of the *right center column, supported by the light infantry*. As *Major Putnam* belonged to the provincials, his station, of course, was *on the flanks*, and not with Lord Howe and the British troops, in the center. We find, also, by these documents, that the confusion which occurred by *the columns falling in one upon another*, happened before the English army met with the French picket,—not afterwards, as Humphreys states; and, indeed, when no enemy could reasonably have been expected to be encountered; and it being broad daylight, it was hardly possible they could mistake each other for enemies. The different costumes of the English and French troops were a sufficient safeguard against such an accident, at least, in the daytime. The *sergeant* and *several privates*, said to have been killed in consequence of making such a mistake, must have been slain by the balls of the enemy; otherwise the histories of the war would certainly contain a notice of such an untoward event.

Was it necessary for the British army, consisting of 16,000 men, to lose a favorite general officer, in order

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to become sufficiently excited, resolutely to attack and defeat an advanced guard of the French, consisting of 500 men? And, after all, it would seem, by the biographer's account, that the issue of the contest was doubtful, till *Putnam's party cut their way obliquely through the enemy's ranks.*

The tender feelings which Maj. Putnam possessed taught him to respect an unfortunate foe, and to strive, by every lenient art in his power, to alleviate the miseries of war. For this purpose he remained on the field until it began to grow dark, employed in collecting such of the enemy as were left wounded, to one place; he gave them all the liquor and little refreshments which he could procure; he furnished to each of them a blanket; he put three blankets under a French sergeant who was badly wounded through the body, and placed him in an easy posture by the side of a tree: the poor fellow could only squeeze his hand with an expressive grasp. "Ah," said Major Putnam, "depend upon it, my brave soldier, you shall be brought to the camp as soon as possible, and the same care shall be taken of you as if you were my brother." The next morning Major Rogers was sent to reconnoiter the field, and to bring off the wounded prisoners; but finding the wounded unable to help themselves, in order to save trouble, he despatched every one of them to the world of spirits. Putnam's was not the only heart that bled. The provincial and British officers, who became acquainted with the fact, were struck with inexpressible horror.

If Putnam was the author of this base slander, his boasted humanity was a consummate sham; for while he was pharisaically proclaiming his own good deeds, he was, at the same time, endeavoring to stab the reputation of a brave, honorable fellow-soldier. The Indian auxiliaries of both the French and English were frequently guilty of the most revolting cruelties to prisoners, whether wounded or not, and the commanding officers always endeavored to screen themselves from the responsibility by a pretence, at least, that it was not in their power to restrain them. But to suppose,

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that a regularly commissioned officer, European or American, would be tolerated in such an act as here related, when no plausible excuse could be given for its prevention, is supremely ridiculous. It would lead to retaliation, on the first opportunity.

It appears, however, that the English army encamped on the battle ground the night succeeding the skirmish; and that Rogers, instead of being sent on to it, was sent off from it, early the next morning. Maj. Mante, as stated above, says—"That the whole benefit of this little success was confined to that of occupying the ground upon which it was obtained, the night after." Maj. Putnam, therefore, might have remained with the *sergeant* mentioned, and others of the wounded enemy, all night, had he so chosen.

The assailants, after having been for more than four hours exposed to a most fatal fire, without making any impression by their reiterated and obstinate proofs of valor, were ordered to retreat. Maj. Putnam, *who had acted as an aid in bringing the provincial regiments successively into action, assisted in preserving order.* The loss on our side was upwards of two thousand killed and wounded. Twenty-five hundred stands of arms were taken by the French. Our army, after sustaining this havoc, retreated with such extraordinary precipitation, that they regained their camp at the southward of Lake George the evening after the action.

Ubiquity, it seems, is one of the qualities attributed to Putnam; for while he was with the English regulars, at the head of the right center column, *cutting his way obliquely through the enemy's ranks*, he was, at the same time, acting as an aid in bringing the provincial regiments *successively* to action. Why really, it does appear that too much capital, on the score of merit, is attempted to be made out of this trifling affair, a mere skirmish, unworthy the name of battle. Whereas, one would think, in reading Humphreys' account of it, that two large armies, of fifteen or twenty thousand men each, had come in contact, and engaged in a tremen-

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dous conflict. We have seen that the French picket of five hundred men, when they discovered the force coming against them, precipitately abandoned their fortification, and were making all the speed possible to arrive at Ticonderoga. But unfortunately missing their way, were overtaken by the English army, and, at once, "*hemmed in on every side.*" It is probable they discharged their muskets once only, and then endeavored to make their escape. Their being surrounded, accounts for the large number, in proportion to their force, that fell into the hands of the English army. *Several* also, says Marshall, were *killed.* It being a momentary affair, precludes the possibility of the provincials being brought *successively* into action. The contest was too soon over to admit of a succession or regular series of tactics.

If Maj. Putnam acted so conspicuous a part in this enterprise, as here stated, it is singular that no historian, not even Rogers, should mention his name in connection with it. His biographer, however, has atoned for the neglect, and done him, perhaps, more than *ample* justice. He belonged to the provincials, where there was opportunity enough for the attainment of fame without endeavoring to foist him into corps with which he had no concern.

I will now give an abstract of Maj. Rogers' account of this expedition, as recorded in his journal.

"On the 22d June, 1758, Lord Howe encamped at Lake George, where formerly stood Fort William Henry, with a part of the troops destined to the attack of Ticonderoga; and on the 28th, Maj. Gen. Abercrombie arrived at the same place with the remainder of the army, where he tarried till the morning of the 5th of July; and then the whole army, consisting of nearly 16,000, embarked in batteaux for Ticonderoga.

"The order of *march* was a most agreeable sight. The regular troops in the center, provincials on each wing, the light infantry on the right of the advance

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guard, the rangers on the left, with Col. Broadstreet's batteaux-men in the center. In this manner we proceeded till dusk, down Lake George, to Sabbath-day Point, where the army halted and refreshed. About ten o'clock the army moved again, and at twelve the whole landed. I immediately sent an officer to wait upon the general for his orders, and received directions from Capt. Abercrombie, one of his aids, to gain the top of a mountain that bore north about a mile from the landing place; and from thence to proceed east to the river that runs into the falls betwixt the landing and the saw-mill; to take possession of some rising ground on the enemy's side, and there wait the army's coming. I immediately marched to the place to which I was ordered, where I arrived in about an hour, and posted my men to as good advantage as I could.

"About two o'clock Cols. Lyman and Fitch came to my rear, and soon after a sharp fire began in the rear of Col. Lyman's regiment; on which he said he would make his front immediately, and desired me to fall on their left flank, which I accordingly did. By this time, Lord Howe, with a detachment from his front, had broke the enemy, *and hemmed them in on every side;* but advancing himself with great eagerness and intrepidity upon them, was unfortunately shot, and died immediately.

"There were taken prisoners of the enemy in this action, five officers, two volunteers, and 160 men, who were sent to the landing place. Nothing more material was done this day. *The next morning, at six o'clock, I was ordered to march with* 400 *rangers, to the river that runs into the falls, the place where I was the day before, and there to halt, on the west side, till further orders;* while Capt. Stark, with the remainder of the rangers, marched with Capt. Abercrombie and Mr. Clerk, the engineer, to observe the position of the enemy at the fort, from whence they returned that evening."

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Thus it appears that Maj. Rogers, so far from being on the ground the day after the battle, *murdering the wounded prisoners*, was at a great remove from it. Mr. Peabody seems a little shocked at this relation; and, after quoting it from Humphreys, he says: "We have no means of contradicting or confirming a story, which every reader would be glad to believe unfounded." Mr. Peabody is familiar with Rogers' journal, referring to it on several occasions, and therefore, one would think, had sufficient means for contradicting a statement so evidently false.

"The whole army lay the ensuing night under arms. By sunrise next morning, Sir William Johnson joined the army, with four hundred and forty Indians. At seven o'clock I received orders to march with my rangers. A lieutenant of Capt. Stark's led the advance guard. I was within about three hundred yards of the breast-work, when my advance guard was ambushed and fired upon by about two hundred Frenchmen. I immediately formed a front, and marched up to the advance guard, who maintained their ground, and the enemy immediately retreated. The batteaux-men now formed on my left, and light infantry on my right. Soon after, three regiments of provincials came up and formed in my rear, at two hundred yards distance. About half an hour past ten, the greatest part of the army being drawn up, a fire began on the left wing, where Col. De Lancey's (the New Yorkers) and the boatmen were posted; upon which I was ordered forward to endeavor to drive the enemy within the breast-work, and then to fall back, that the pickets and grenadiers might march through. The enemy soon retired within their works, and Maj. Proby marched through with his pickets, within a few yards of the breast-work, where he unhappily fell; and the enemy keeping up a heavy fire, the soldiers hastened to the right-about, when Col. Haldiman came up with the grenadiers to support them, being followed by the battalions in bri-

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gades. Some of the provincials with the Mohawks came up also. Col. Haldiman advanced very near the breast-work, which was at least eight feet high.

"We toiled with repeated attacks for four hours, being greatly embarrassed by trees that were felled by the enemy without their breast-work, when the general thought proper to order a retreat, directing me to bring up the rear, which I did in the dusk of the evening. On the ninth we arrived at our encampment at the south end of Lake George; where the army received the thanks of the general for their good behavior, and were ordered to intrench themselves. The wounded were sent to Fort Edward and Albany. Our loss, both in the regular and provincial troops, was somewhat considerable. The enemy's loss was about five hundred, besides those who were taken prisoners."

As one day Maj. Putnam chanced to lie with a batteau and five men, on the eastern shore of the Hudson, near the Rapids, contiguous to which Fort Miller stood, his men on the opposite bank had given him to understand that a large body of savages were in his rear, and would be upon him in a moment. To stay and be sacrificed,—to attempt crossing and be shot, or to go down the falls, with an almost absolute certainty of being drowned, were the sole alternatives that presented themselves to his choice. So instantaneously was the latter adopted, that one man who had rambled a little from the party, was, of necessity, left, and fell a miserable victim to savage barbarity. The Indians arrived on the shore soon enough to fire many balls on the batteau before it could be got under way. No sooner had our batteau-men escaped, by favor of the rapidity of the current, beyond the reach of musket-shot, than death seemed only to have been avoided in one form to be encountered in another not less terrible. Prominent rocks, latent shelves, absorbing eddies, and abrupt descents, for a quarter of a mile, afforded scarcely the smallest chance of escaping without a miracle. Putnam, trusting himself to a good providence, whose kindness he had often experienced, rather than to men, whose tenderest mercies are cruelty, was now seen to place himself sedately at

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the helm, and afford an astonishing spectacle of serenity. His companions, with a mixture of terror, admiration, and wonder, saw him incessantly changing the course, to avoid the jaws of ruin, that seemed expanded to swallow the whirling boat. Twice he turned it fairly round to shun the rifts of rocks. Amidst these eddies, in which there was the greatest danger of its foundering, at one moment the sides were exposed to the fury of the waves; then the stern, and next the bow glanced obliquely onward, with inconceivable velocity. With not less amazement the savages beheld him sometimes mounting the billows, then plunging abruptly down, at other times skilfully veering from the rocks, and shooting through the only narrow passage; until, at last, they viewed the boat safely gliding on the smooth surface of the stream below. At this sight, it is asserted, that these rude sons of nature were affected with the same kind of superstitious veneration which the Europeans, in the dark ages, entertained for some of their most valorous champions. They deemed the man invulnerable, whom their balls, on his pushing from shore, could not touch; and whom they had seen steering in safety down the rapids that had never before been passed. They conceived it would be an affront against the *Great Spirit* to attempt to kill this favored mortal with *powder* and *ball*, if they should ever see and know him again.

If the Indians looked upon Putnam as invulnerable by means of powder and ball, it seems, they had a different opinion of the instrumentality of the tomahawk; to which, it will be seen, he soon after this affair submitted.

The author, in the foregoing description, has shown that he possessed more poetical talents, than qualifications for an historian. The account is too inflated for a true narrative of facts. A poet, on his first passing through Hell-Gate, on the east river, or hearing it described, would be apt to depict the awful dangers it presents in equally glowing terms. Yet this passage is daily navigated without fear, as probably now are the rapids in question.

In the month of August, [1758] five hundred men were

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employed, under the orders of Majs. Rogers and Putnam, to watch the motions of the enemy near Ticonderoga. At South Bay they separated the party into two equal divisions, and Rogers took a position on Wood Creek, twelve miles distant from Putnam.

Upon being, some time afterwards, discovered, they formed a reunion, and concerted measures for returning to Fort Edward. Their mareh through the woods was *in three divisions by* FILES: the right commanded by Rogers, the left by Putnam, and the center by Capt. D'Ell. The first night they encamped on the banks of *Clear River*, about a mile from old Fort Ann, which had been formerly built by Gen. Nicholson. Next morning Maj. Rogers, and a British officer named Irwin, incautiously suffered themselves, from a spirit of false emulation, to be engaged in firing at a mark. Nothing could have been more repugnant to the military principles of Putnam than such conduct, or reprobated by him in more pointed terms. As soon as the heavy dew which had fallen the preceding night would permit, the detachment moved in one body, Putnam being in front, D'Ell in center, and Rogers in the rear. The impervious growth of shrubs and underbrush that had sprung up, where the land had been partially cleared some years before, occasioned this change in the order of march. At the moment of moving, the famous French partisan Molang, who had been sent with five hundred men to intercept our party, was not more than one mile and a half distant from them.* Having heard the firing, he hastened to lay an ambuscade precisely in that part of the wood most favorable to his project. Maj. Putnam was just emerging from the thicket, into the common forest, when the enemy rose, and with discordant *yells* and *whoops*, commenced an attack upon the right of his division. Surprised, but *undismayed*, Putnam halted, returned the fire, and passed the word for the other divisions to advance for his support. D'Ell came. The action, though widely scattered, and principally fought between man and man, soon grew general and intensely warm. It would be as difficult as useless to describe this irregular and ferocious

* Here the "one mile and a half" is reduced by Mr. Peabody to "scarce a mile," for fear, it may be supposed, the firing would not be heard at a mile and a half distance.

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mode of fighting. *Rogers came not up;* but, as he declared afterwards, formed a circular file between our party and Wood Creek, to prevent their being taken in rear or enfiladed.* Successful as he commonly was, his conduct did not always pass without unfavorable imputation. It was a current saying in the camp, "that Rogers always *sent*, but Putnam *led* his men to action;" yet, in justice, it ought to be remarked here, that the latter has never been known, in relating the story of this day's disaster, to affix any stigma upon the conduct of the former.

This is to knock a man down, then beg pardon, and allege that no offence was intended. The saddle is here evidently put upon the wrong horse. "That Rogers always *sent*, but Putnam *led* his men to action," is so contrary to all the historical records of the war in question, that it is astonishing it should have become *a current saying in the camp.* At any rate, the saying will not now pass current with those conversant with the history.

Gen. Putnam had doubtless read Rogers' journal, and had not forgotten his report of a scout under the command of Putnam, in which he says:—"Upon Capt. Putnam's return, we were informed, *he had ventured within eight miles of the French fort at Ticonderoga*, and that a party, *he had sent* to make discoveries, reported to him," &c. (See Introduction.)

This small party might as well have been sent from the fort in the first place; as a larger body of men, at the distance of eight miles, could render it no support in case of an attack.

"Maj. Putnam, perceiving it would be impracticable to

* Mr. Peabody has taken the liberty to make the insinuation of cowardice on the part of Rogers upon this occasion somewhat more pointed than the foregoing. He says:—"The assault, however unexpected, was sustained with gallantry and coolness; Putnam ordered his men to halt, returned the fire, and called upon Dalzell and Rogers to support him. Dalzell came immediately up; but Rogers, instead of advancing to the aid of his associates, stationed his men between the combatants and Wood Creek, in order, as he affirmed, to guard against an attack in the rear; or, as was suspected by others, to relieve himself from the necessity of making one in an opposite direction."

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cross the creek, determined to maintain his ground. Inspired by his example, the officers and men behaved with great bravery; sometimes they fought aggregately in open view, and sometimes individually under cover; taking aim from behind the bodies of trees, and acting in a manner independent of each other. For himself, having discharged his fusee several times, at length *it missed fire*, while the muzzle was pressed against the breast of a large and well-proportioned savage. This *warrior*, availing himself of the indefensible attitude of his adversary, with a *tremendous war-whoop*, sprang forward with his lifted hatchet, and compelled him to surrender; and having disarmed and bound him fast to a tree, returned to the battle.

The intrepid Capts. D'Ell and Harman, who now commanded, were forced to give ground for a little distance: the savages, conceiving this to be the certain harbinger of victory, rushed impetuously on, with *dreadful* and *redoubled cries*. But our two partisans, collecting a handful of brave men, gave the pursuers so warm a reception as to oblige them, in turn, to retreat a little beyond the spot at which the action had commenced. Here they made a stand. This change of ground occasioned the tree to which Putnam was tied to be directly between the fire of the two parties. Human imagination can hardly figure to itself a more deplorable situation. The balls flew incessantly from either side, many struck the tree, while some passed through the sleeves and skirts of his coat. In this state of jeopardy, unable to move his body, to stir his limbs, or even to incline his head, he remained more than an hour. So equally balanced, and so obstinate was the fight! At one moment, while the battle swerved in favor of the enemy, a young savage chose an odd way of discovering his humor. He found Putnam bound. He might have dispatched him at a blow. But he loved better to excite the terrors of the prisoner, by hurling a tomahawk at his head; or rather it should seem his object was to see how near he could throw it without touching him —the weapon struck in the tree a number of times at a *hair's-breadth* distance from the mark.

Not only the *hair-breadth* escapes of Putnam border on the miraculous, but it is also most wonderful, that a savage warrior, in the heat of a doubtful battle, should

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have left the field of action, to amuse himself in the manner here stated; thus, however, the book has it, and the reader is left to form his own conjectures in regard to the accuracy in the narration of such strange occurrences.

The author proceeds to detail the cruel treatment Putnam received from the Indians. Among the rest, awful preparations were made for burning him alive; but just before its intended consummation, he was fortunately rescued by a French officer. The Indian to whom he surrendered, however, was not privy to this transaction; who is reported as treating him kindly. But determined not to lose his captive, he had recourse to the following singular expedient, says the author, to prevent it.

He took the moccasins from his feet, and tied them to one of his wrists; then directing him to lie down on his back upon the bare ground, he stretched one arm to its full length, and bound it fast to a young tree; the other arm was extended and bound in the same manner—his legs were stretched apart and fastened to two saplings. Then a number of tall, but slender poles were cut down, which, with some long bushes, were laid across his body from head to foot: on each side lay as many Indians as could conveniently find lodging, in order to prevent the possibility of his escape. In this disagreeable and painful posture he remained until morning.

The next night the party arrived at Ticonderoga. From whence Putnam was conducted to Montreal by a French officer.

The cruelty of the American Indians in war to their prisoners, is well known, and the relation of instances of it cause no surprise; but such unusual and unnecessary precautions, as here recited, for the safe keeping of a single prisoner, excite our utmost wonder. Every thing, however, relating to Putnam, seems *sui generis*, peculiar to himself alone, nothing of the kind having ever happened to any other individual. The Indians must, indeed, have looked upon him as more than mortal.

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If we can place any confidence in the official reports of Maj. Rogers, the whole of the foregoing statement, so far as respects the action, and the purpose of the expedition, is erroneous in every particular.

It is not usual, nor would it be safe, in military expeditions, to make a copartnership in the command, lest the parties should disagree, and thereby render abortive the object intended to be effected. Rogers had the entire command in this case. He received an order, on the 28th of July, 1758, to embark with 700 men, with a view of intercepting a party of the enemy, who had, the day before, attacked a convoy of wagoners, near Half-way-brook, and killed one hundred and sixty men. Maj. Putnam, it seems, with *a party of provincials*, as well as some companies of regular English troops, was detached to join his command, there not being a sufficiency of rangers for the service required. Col. Humphreys, having used up the cause of this expedition for another, undertaken for a different purpose, in November, 1755, (see p. 41,) states this to be "*to watch the motions of the enemy near Ticonderoga.*" Whereas, five men, instead of five hundred, would have been sufficient for this object. There was no separation of the party, nor was their being discovered the cause of the conclusion to return to their station; but in consequence of the enemy's having escaped them, which rendered needless their longer remaining.

I will give Maj. Rogers' report of this affair, in confirmation of what I assert. And let me impress upon the reader the fact, that Rogers kept a journal of his transactions, noting each day's occurrence, and making regular reports thereof to the commanding generals. It is not pretended that Gen. Putnam did any such thing, depending entirely upon memory to detail to his biographer events in which he had concern, that happened twenty years and upwards before. Without doubting his veracity, therefore, we may account for

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the numerous errors which appear in his Life, to forgetfulness. Add to this the liability of misconceiving oral communications.

The attempt here made to bring in doubt the bravery of Rogers is as vain as unjust and disingenuous. He was brave to a fault—to rashness; and probably fought more desperate battles, in this war, than any two officers engaged in it, on either side. His wounds were honorable testimonials of his personal exposure; while some others, who served in that war, could not show a scratch received from the enemy in battle.

Rogers, having justly acquired great fame for his useful services, was doubtless envied by many,-who, not willing to run the same hazards as he had done, hoped, by depreciating his merits, to render themselves nearer on a par with him. And it must be confessed, for the fact is too palpable to admit of disguise, that Maj. Putnam was one of the number.

It will be seen presently that Putnam, in the affair in question, surrendered on the first onset, before the detachment was formed for action, and being, of course, removed from the battle ground, could have no personal knowledge of what passed afterwards. His communications, therefore, to his biographer of the occurrences which took place in the engagement, must have been obtained from hearsay reports, utterly destitute of truth. In conformity to these ridiculous rumors, Col. Humphreys *modestly* cashiers Rogers, and gives the command to the firm of Capts. D'Ell and Harman; while Mr. Peabody confines it to Capt. Dalzell, as he calls Humphreys' D'Ell. This is really a summary way of suiting historical facts to a particular purpose. Mr. Peabody had read Rogers' journal, and, I must think, has sinned against light.

Here follows Rogers' official report of the scout in question:

"July 8, 1758. By order of the general [Abercrombie] I this day began a scout to South Bay, from which

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I returned the 16th, having effected nothing considerable, except discovering a large party of the enemy, supposed to be nearly a thousand, on the east side of the lake. This party the next day fell upon a detachment of Col. Nicholl's regiment, at the Half-way-brook, killed three captains and upwards of twenty privates.

"The 27th, another party of the enemy fell upon a convoy of wagoners, between Fort Edward and Half-way-brook, and killed one hundred and sixteen men, sixteen of whom were rangers. In pursuit of this party, with a design to intercept their retreat, I was ordered to embark, the 28th, with seven hundred men; the enemy, however, escaped me, and in my return home, on the 31st, I was met by an express from the general, with orders to march to South and East Bay, and return by way of Fort Edward. In the prosecution of which orders, nothing very material happened till the 8th of August. Early in the morning of that day we decamped from the place where Fort Anne stood, and began our march; Maj. Putnam with a *party of provincials* marching in front; my rangers in the rear; Capt. Dalyell [Humphreys' D'Ell] with the regulars in the center; the other officers suitably disposed among the men, being in number five hundred and thirty, exclusive of officers; a number having by leave returned home the day before. After marching about three quarters of a mile, a fire began with five hundred of the enemy in the front. I brought my people into as good order as possible; Capt. Dalyell in the center, and the rangers on the right with Capt. Partridge's light infantry: on the left was Capt. Giddings, with the Boston troops; and Maj. Putnam, being in the front of his men when the fire began, the enemy rushed in, took him, one lieutenant, and two privates, prisoners, and considerably disordered others of the party; who afterwards rallied and did good service, particularly Lieut. Durkee, who, notwithstanding two wounds, one in his

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thigh, the other in his wrist, kept in the action the whole time, encouraging his men with great earnestness and resolution. Capt. Dalyell with Gage's light infantry, and Lieut. Eyer's of the 44th regiment, behaved with great bravery, they being in the center, where at first was the hottest fire; which afterwards fell to the right, where the rangers were, and where the enemy made four different attacks. In short, officers and soldiers, throughout the detachment, behaved with such vigor and resolution as in one hour's time broke the enemy, and obliged them to retreat; but this they did with such caution, in small scattering parties, as gave us no great opportunity to harass them by a pursuit. We kept the field, and buried our dead.

"When the action was over, we had missing fifty-four men, twenty-one of whom came in, being separated from us while the action continued. The enemy's loss was one hundred and ninety-nine killed on the spot, some of whom were Indians. We arrived at Fort Edward on the 9th, being met, at some distance from it, by Col. Provost, with a party of three hundred, and refreshments for the wounded, which I had desired by an express sent before." (Journal, p. 116.)

I will here notice a mistake of some little importance, which Mr. Everett, in his Life of Stark, has, it must be supposed, fallen into through inadvertence. Speaking of the scout, treated of above, he says: "In the progress of this action Maj. Israel Putnam, *commanding a company of rangers*, fell into the hands of the enemy. He was tied to a tree by the Indians, and for a long time was within the fire of both parties, and otherwise exposed to peril and outrage from the savage foe." (p. 44.) Now, Mr. Everett professedly takes his information of the early career of Gen. Stark from the New Hampshire abstract of Rogers' journal, which contains a particular account of the battle here alluded to. This statement, therefore, would appear to be sanctioned by that work; whereas, on the very page in which Put-

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nam's capture is mentioned, it is stated, in giving the order in which the party proceeded, that "Maj. Putnam with a *party of provincials* marched in front;" the same as above stated from the London edition of the journal. Maj. Putnam, therefore, did not *command a company of rangers*, upon this occasion. He was never commissioned as an officer of the rangers; and no attempt to smuggle him into that corps can admit of justification. The notice of the cruel treatment received by Putnam from the Indians, I perceive, is copied from a note of the N. H. editor. Rogers makes no mention of it in his journal, he probably being unacquainted with the fact. I will give, from Maj. Mante's History, a short account of this affair; which accords with the statement of Rogers, bating a few trifling discrepancies, as follows:

"Whilst the intrenchments of Gen. Abercrombie enclosed him in security, M. De Montcalm exerted his usual activity in harassing the frontiers, and in detaching parties to attack the convoys of the English. On the 17th of July, one of these parties destroyed three provincial officers and upwards of twenty men, at Half-way-brook; on the 27th of the same month, one hundred and sixteen wagoners and sixteen rangers met with the same fate between that place and Fort Edward. Maj. Rogers was then detached with a party of seven hundred men in quest of the enemy; but they had the good fortune to escape him. On his return he met an express from the general, with orders to proceed to South and East Bay, and return by Fort Edward. Whilst the major was pursuing the route prescribed him by these orders, he was attacked, on the 8th of August, near the spot where Fort Anne stood, by about five hundred of the enemy, his own number being reduced to five hundred and thirty men. But both he and his men behaved with so much spirit that in an hour they broke the assailants, and obliged them to retreat, though, such was the enemy's caution, without any prospect of

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being able to harass them by a pursuit. In this action there fell one hundred and ninety of the French, and the English lost about forty, the missing included. Maj. Putnam and two lieutenants were made prisoners." (p. 158.)

There is here no mention of any copartnership in the command. The orders were given to Rogers only; and Putnam evidently did not know the object of the expedition.

We left Maj. Putnam at Montreal. At this place were several prisoners, and among them Col. Peter Schuyler; who generously furnished Maj. Putnam with clothing and money. An exchange of prisoners was about to be made. Col. Schuyler was comprehended in the cartel, and, by his management, Putnam was also included. Apprehensive if it should be known that Putnam was a distinguished partisan, his liberation might be retarded; and knowing that there were officers, who, from the length of their captivity, had a claim of priority to exchange, Schuyler made use of the following artifice:

There is, said he to the governor, an old man here, who is a provincial major, and wishes to be at home with his wife and children; he can do no good here or anywhere else; I believe your excellency had better keep some of the young men, who have no wife or children to care for, and let the old fellow go home with me." This justifiable finesse had the desired effect.

It was certainly good policy to pass Maj. Putnam, upon this occasion, under his true title, *provincial major*, instead of that assumed for him by his biographer, as an officer of the rangers. The rangers had done the enemy much harm, and it might be expected would do them still more. If, therefore, Putnam had been supposed to belong to this corps, it is not probable he would have received the special favor of being exchanged, in preference to others having superior claims in consequence of longer detention as prisoners. But

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it would, indeed, have been strange, had Putnam actually been attached to the rangers, and performed such feats of valor, as recorded by Col. Humphreys, that his name should not have been known in Canada. It does not, however, appear that he had ever been heard of in that quarter.

At the house of Col. Schuyler, Maj. Putnam became acquainted with Mrs. Howe, a fair captive, whose history would not be read without emotion, if it could be written in the same affecting manner in which I have often heard it told. She was still young and handsome herself, though she had two daughters of marriageable age. [The eldest, however, was but eleven years old.]

Distress, which had taken somewhat from the original redundancy of her bloom, and added a softening paleness to her cheeks, rendered her appearance the more engaging. Her face, that seemed to have been formed for the assemblage of dimples and smiles, was clouded with care. The natural sweetness was not, however, soured by despondency and petulance, but chastened by humility and resignation. This mild daughter of sorrow looked as if she had known the day of prosperity, when serenity and gladness of soul were the inmates of her bosom. That day was past, and the once lively features now assumed a tender melancholy, which witnessed her irreparable loss. She needed not the customary weeds of mourning, or the fallacious pageantry of wo, to prove her widowed state. She was in that stage of affliction when the excess is so far abated as to permit the subject to be drawn into conversation, without opening the wound afresh. It is then rather a source of pleasure than pain to dwell upon the circumstances in narration. Every thing conspired to make her story interesting. Her first husband had been killed and scalped by the Indians some years before. By an unexpected assault, in 1756, upon Fort Dummer, where she then happened to be present with Mr. Howe, her second husband, *the savages carried the fort, murdered the greater part of the garrison*, mangled in death her husband, and led her away with seven children into captivity? She was for some months kept with them; and during their rambles she was frequently on the point of perishing with

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hunger, and as often subjected to hardships seemingly intolerable to one of so delicate a frame. Some time after the career of her miseries began, the Indians selected a couple of their young men to marry her daughters. The fright and disgust which the intelligence of this intention occasioned to these poor young creatures, added infinitely to the sorrows and perplexities of their frantic mother. To prevent the hated connection, all the activity of female resource was called into exertion. She found an opportunity of conveying to the governor a petition, that her daughters might be received into a convent for the sake of securing the salvation of their souls. Happily the pious fraud succeeded.

About the same time the savages separated, and carried off her other five children into different tribes. She was ransomed by an elderly French officer for four hundred livres. Though all the world was no better than a desert, and all its inhabitants were then indifferent to her, yet the loveliness of her appearance in sorrow had awakened affections, which, in the aggravation of her troubles, were to become a new source of afflictions.

The officer who bought her of the Indians had a son who also held a commission, and resided with his father. During her continuance in the same house, at St. John's, the double attachment of the father and the son rendered her situation extremely distressing. It is true, the calmness of age delighted to gaze respectfully on her beauty; but the impetuosity of youth was fired to madness by the sight of her charms. [This woman must have been another *Ninon de Lenclos*.]

The affair soon reached the governor's ears, and the young officer was, shortly afterwards, sent on a tour of duty to Detroit.

This gave her a short respite; but she dreaded his return, and the humiliating insults for which she might be reserved. Col. Schuyler became her protector, and endeavored to procure her liberty. The person who purchased her from the savages, unwilling to part with so fair a purchase, demanded a thousand livres as her ransom. But Col. Schuyler obtained from the governor an order, in consequence of which Mrs. Howe was given up to him for four hundred livres;

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nor did his active goodness rest until every one of her five sons was restored to her.

Business having made it necessary that Col. Schuyler should precede the prisoners who were exchanged, he recommended the fair captive to the protection of his friend Putnam. She had just recovered from the measles when the party was preparing to set off for New England. By this time the young French officer had returned, with his passion rather increased than abated by absence. He pursued her wheresoever she went, and, although he could make no advances in her affection, he seemed resolved, by perseverance, to carry his point. Mrs. Howe, terrified by his treatment, was obliged to keep constantly near Maj. Putnam, who informed the young officer that he should protect that lady at the risk of his life.

In the long march from captivity, through an inhospitable wilderness, encumbered with five small children, she suffered incredible hardships. Though endowed with masculine fortitude, she was truly feminine in strength, and must have fainted by the way, had it not been for the assistance of Maj. Putnam. There were a thousand good offices which the helplessness of her condition dèmanded, and which the gentleness of his nature delighted to perform. He assisted in leading her little ones, and in carrying them over the swampy grounds and runs of water, with which their course was frequently intersected. He mingled his own mess with that of the widow and fatherless, and assisted them in supplying and preparing their provisions. Upon arriving within the settlements, they experienced a reciprocal regret at separation, and were only consoled by the expectation of soon mingling in the embraces of their former acquaintances and dearest connections.

After the conquest of Canada, in 1760, she made a journey to Quebec, in order to bring back her two daughters, whom she had left in a convent. She found one of them married to a French officer. The other having contracted a great fondness for the religious sisterhood, with reluctance consented to leave them and return.

The editor of the Boston edition of this work, published in 1818, makes the following note: "Two or

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three incidents respecting Mrs. Howe, *which were received by the author from Gen. Putnam*, and inserted in the former editions, are omitted in this, as they appeared, on further information, to be *mistakes*."

Now, if Gen. Putnam has made *two or three mistakes* in the story of Mrs. Howe, is it not probable he has made others in the extraordinary and, in a measure, incredible incidents of his life, as related by his biographer? Not having read any former edition of the work, I am not aware of the mistakes to which allusion is here made.

Some time after I had made the foregoing remarks, and passed on to other matters, I accidentally met with the story of Mrs. Howe's captivity, as related by herself; and recorded in an appendix to the third volume of Belknap's History of New Hampshire. By which it appears, that the whole account of Col. Humphreys, so far as relates to the part assigned to Maj. Putnam, is a *sheer mistake*. The article is entitled—"A PARTICULAR ACCOUNT OF THE CAPTIVITY OF MRS. JEMIMA HOWE: by the Rev. Bunker Gay, of Hinsdale, in a letter to the author;"—of which the following is an abstract:

"On the 27th of July, 1755, Caleb Howe, Hilkiah Grout, and Benjamin Gaffield, were ambushed by a party of Indians, as they were returning from their labor in the field to a place called Bridgman's Fort. Howe was killed; Gaffield was drowned in attempting to cross the river, and Grout made his escape. The Indians went directly to Bridgman's Fort, where the families of these unfortunate men resided. There was no man in it, and only three women, the wives of the above-mentioned men, and their children, consisting of eleven, seven of whom were Mrs. Howe's. They had heard the report of guns, and were impatient to learn the cause. By the noise without, they concluded their friends had returned, and too hastily opened the gate to receive them; when to their inexpressible surprise they admitted the savages, and these three families

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were made captives. *The eldest of Mrs. Howe's children was eleven years old,* and the youngest but six months. The two eldest were daughters, which she had by her first husband, Mr. William Phipps, who was also slain by the Indians. It was from the mouth of this woman that I lately received, I doubt not a true, though, to be sure, a very brief and imperfect history of her captivity, which I transmit for your perusal. It may perhaps afford you some amusement, if you should not think it, or an abbreviation of it, worthy to be preserved among the records you are about to publish."

Here follows a detail of Mrs. Howe's sufferings, which is very similar to all cases of the kind with Indian captives, and is not sufficiently interesting for insertion here, if, indeed, I had room to spare for the purpose. Mrs. Howe had the good fortune, as stated by Col. Humphreys, to procure her two daughters to be placed in a nunnery. "At the close of the war," she says, "the governor returned to France, taking my eldest daughter with him, whom he married to a French gentleman by the name of Cron Louis. My other daughter still remaining in the nunnery, I made a journey to Canada, resolving to use my best endeavors not to return without her. But I found it extremely difficult to prevail with her to quit the nunnery. Indeed, she absolutely refused, and all the persuasions and arguments I could use had no effect, until I obtained a letter from the governor to the superintendent of the nuns, in which he threatened, if my daughter should not immediately be delivered into my hands, or could not be prevailed with to submit to my parental authority, he would send a band of soldiers to assist me in bringing her away. Upon hearing this she made no further resistance. But so extremely bigoted was she to the customs and religion of the place, that she left it with the greatest reluctance, and the most bitter lamentations, which she continued as we passed in the streets, and refused to be comforted. My good friend, *Maj. Small,* whom we met with on the way, tried all he could to console her,

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and was so kind as to bear us company, and carry my daughter behind him on horseback.

"But I have run on a little before my story, for I have not yet informed you of the means and manner of my own redemption; to the accomplishing of which several gentlemen contributed. To whose goodness, therefore, I am greatly indebted, and hope I shall never be *so ungrateful as to forget.* Col. Schuyler in particular was so very kind and generous as to advance two thousand seven hundred livres to procure a ransom for myself and three of my children. *He accompanied and conducted us from Montreal to Albany,* and entertained us in the most friendly and hospitable manner a considerable time, at his own house, and I believe entirely at his own expense."

"I have spun out the above narrative," says Mr. Gay, "to a much greater length than I at first intended, and shall conclude it with referring you, for a more ample and *brilliant* account of the captive heroine who is the subject of it, to Col. Humphreys' History of the Life of Gen. Israel Putnam, with some remarks upon a few clauses of it. I never indeed had the pleasure of perusing the whole of that history, but remember to have seen, some time ago, an extract from it in one of the Boston newspapers, in which the colonel has extolled the *beauty, good sense,* and *rare accomplishments* of Mrs. Howe, in a style that may appear, to those who are acquainted with her, at this day *romantic* and extravagant. And the colonel must have been misinformed with respect to some particulars that he has mentioned in her story. Indeed, when I read the extract from his history to Mrs. Tate, which name she has derived from a third husband, whose widow she now remains, she seemed to be well pleased, and said at first it was all true, but soon after contradicted the circumstance of her lover's being *so bereft of his senses when he saw her moving off in a boat at some distance from the shore, as to plunge into the water after her, in consequence of which he was seen no more.*

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It is true, she said, that as she was returning from Montreal to Albany, she met with young Saccapee on the way. That *she was in the boat with Col. Schuyler*, that the French officer came on board the boat, made her some handsome presents, took his final leave of her, and departed, to all appearance, in tolerable good humor.

"She moreover says, that when she went to Canada for her daughter, she met with him again; that he showed her a lock of her hair, and her name likewise printed with vermilion on his arm. As to her being *chosen agent to go to Europe*, in behalf of the people of Hinsdale, when Col. Howard obtained from the government of New York a patent for their lands on the west side of Connecticut river, *it was never once thought of by the Hinsdale people*, until the above mentioned extract arrived among them; in which the author asserts it as *an undoubted fact.*" This statement of Mrs. Howe's being chosen by the people of Hinsdale their *embassadress* on a foreign mission, and that of Saccapee's *plunging into the water after her*, and in consequence was no more seen, are among the *two or three mistakes* mentioned by the Boston editor as being omitted.

The discrepancies in the story of Mrs. Howe, as given by Col. Humphreys and herself, are astonishing. In the first place, there is a variance in the name of the fort in which she was made a prisoner; but admitting it may have been known under two different denominations, what explanation can be made for Col. Humphreys' saying—"The savages carried the fort, and murdered the greater part of the garrison;" when, according to Mrs. Howe, "*there was no man in it*, and only three women and their children," none of whom were murdered.

The love affair of the young French officer, Saccapee, with the *fair captive*, as related by Col. Humphreys, turns out to be a real romance, founded on fact, to be sure, but ornamented with fictitious amplifica-

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tions, usual and expected in such compositions, but offensive and inadmissible in historical narrative.

But what is most astounding and unaccountable is, that Col. H. should say—"Business having made it necessary that Col. Schuyler should precede the prisoners who were exchanged, he recommanded the *fair captive* to the protection of his friend Putnam." He then gives a minute account of the gallant manner in which Maj. Putnam executed his trust, in acts of kindness and civility to the widow and her children, in traversing "the swampy grounds and runs of water, with which their course was frequently intersected. And upon their arrival within *the settlements*, they experienced a reciprocal regret at separation." Whereas, by Mrs. Howe's statement, *no business* required Col. Schuyler to precede her in the journey, whatever may have been the case in respect to the other exchanged prisoners. She, it may be presumed, wanted no time to prepare for her return; and she says positively, that Col. Schuyler conducted her from Montreal to Albany. They came by water to the head of the lake, and then doubtless in some vehicle to Albany.

Putnam, it is said, separated from his charge "upon their arrival within the settlements." This is very vague; why not name the place at which the separation took place? And why should they discontinue their route together immediately on coming to a settlement? This is not accounted for. If, moreover, Maj. Putnam had shown the civilities to Mrs. Howe, as stated, is it probable that she would have been so unthankful as not even to mention his name; when she gratefully acknowledges the favors of others, particularly those of Col. Schuyler, who, by Humphreys' account, was not much more entitled to her thanks than Putnam?

There appear to be shocking *mistakes* in this whole matter; and it will no doubt be conceded, that implicit confidence cannot be placed in the entire Essay of Col. Humphreys on the Life of Gen. Putnam.

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CHAPTER III.

We now arrive at the period when the prowess of Britain, victorious alike by sea and by land, in the new and in the old world, had elevated that name to the zenith of national glory. The conquest of Quebec opened the way for the total reduction of Canada. On the side of the lakes, Amherst having captured the posts of Ticonderoga and Crown Point, applied himself to strengthen the latter. Putnam, who had been raised to the rank of lieut. colonel, and present at these operations, was employed the remainder of this and some part of the succeeding season, in superintending the parties which were detached to procure timber and other materials for the fortification.

In 1760, Gen. Amherst, a sagacious, humane, and experienced commander, planned the termination of the war in Canada, by a bloodless conquest. For this purpose, three armies were destined to co-operate, by different routes, against Montreal, the only remaining place of strength the enemy held in that country. The corps formerly commanded by Gen. Wolfe, now by Gen. Murray, was ordered to ascend the river St. Lawrence; another, under Col. Haviland, to penetrate by the Isle Aux Noix; and the third, consisting of about ten thousand men, commanded by the general himself, after passing up the Mohawk river, and taking its course by the lake Ontario, was to form a junction by falling down the St. Lawrence. In this progress, more than one occasion presented itself to manifest the intrepidity and soldiership of Lieut. Col. Putnam. Two armed vessels obstructed the passage, and prevented the attack on Oswegatchie. Putnam, with one thousand men, in fifty batteaux, undertook to board them. *This dauntless officer, ever sparing of the blood of others, as prodigal of his own,* to accom-

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plish it with the less loss, put himself, with a chosen crew, *a beetle and wedges*, in the van, with a design to *wedge* the *rudders*, so that the vessels should not be able to turn their broadsides, or perform any other manœuvre. All the men in his little fleet were ordered to strip to their waistcoats, and advance at the same time. He promised, if he lived, to join and show them the way up the sides. Animated by so daring an example, [promised to be given,] they moved swiftly, in profound stillness, as to certain victory or death. The people on board the ships, beholding the *good countenance* with which they approached, *ran one of the vessels on shore*, and *struck the colors of the other*. Had it not been for the *dastardly conduct* of the ship's company in the latter, who compelled the captain to haul down his ensign, he would have given the assailants a bloody reception: for the vessels were well provided with spars, nettings, and every customary instrument of annoyance as well as defence.

It now remained to attack the fortress, which stood on an island, and seemed to have been rendered inaccessible by a *high abattis of black ash*, that everywhere projected over the water. Lieut. Col. Putnam proposed a mode of attack, and offered his services to carry it into effect. The general *approved the proposal*. Our partisan, accordingly, caused a sufficient number of boats to be fitted for the enterprise. The sides of each boat were surrounded with fascines, musket proof, which covered the men completely. *A wide plank, twenty feet in length*, was then fitted to every boat in such manner, by having an angular piece sawed from one extremity, that, when fastened by ropes on both sides of the bow, it might be raised or lowered at pleasure. The design was, that the plank should be held erect while the oarsmen forced the bow with the utmost exertion against the abattis; and that afterwards, being dropped on the pointed brush, it should serve as a kind of bridge to assist the men in passing over them. Lieut. Col. Putnam having made his dispositions to attempt the escalade in many places at the same moment, advanced with his boats in admirable order. The garrison perceiving these extraordinary and unexpected machines, waited not the assault, but capitulated. Lieut. Col. Putnam was particularly honored by Gen. Amherst, for his

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ingenuity in this invention, and promptitude in its execution. The three armies arrived at Montreal within two days of each other; and the conquest of Canada became complete without the loss of a single drop of blood.

Some of the speculations recorded in the biography of Gen. Putnam are actually too outrè and absurd to admit of serious consideration. Such are the projects for capturing armed vessels, by first rendering their rudders useless by means of beetle and wedges; and of scaling an abattis by boards fastened to the bow of row boats. The first could certainly not be effected, unless the crews of the vessels, including the sentinel, were asleep; and as to the latter, an abattis erected on the bank of a river, for the protection of a fortification, would necessarily be some twelve or fifteen feet, at the top, above the boat on the river, and the troops to ascend it, would, therefore, have to *walk the plank* at an elevation probably of 90 degrees, no very easy task.

Gen. Putnam seems to have been much addicted to waggery; and his ignorant neighbors had swallowed with eagerness the relations of the marvelous incidents of his life; and finding, also, that his young aid-de-camp was equally credulous, he thought proper to entertain him in the same manner. It is not likely, however, that he expected the narratives would ever meet the public eye, in print. But after they were presented to the public and well received, he probably thought it would be as well to let them pass uncontradicted.

Be this as it may, I am prepared to show, that the whole account of Gen. Amherst's expedition, here given, is erroneous in every particular; that no such projects, as spoken of, were attempted, or contemplated to be put in execution; that one of the French vessels in question, had accidentally ran aground in the river St. Lawrence, before the British entered it; and that the other fought about *four hours* before surrendering, having twelve men killed, or wounded.

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In ordinary cases, a passing remark only would be required, to expose the absurdity of the foregoing statements. But when a large portion of the public, which is always fond of the marvelous, appears disposed to believe whatever has, or may be said, of the prowess and extraordinary achievements of Gen. Putnam, it becomes necessary to set forth more particularly the fallacy upon which the pretensions are founded. I shall, therefore, quote, at considerable length, the accounts of the transactions in question, by two historians of the first respectability, the one American, the other English. The latter gives a minute detail of the circumstances attending the capture of the French vessel, and of the investment of the fort at Isle Royal, and of its final surrender by capitulation.

The first authority I shall cite is "THE HISTORY OF CONNECTICUT, FROM 1630 to 1764. BY BENJAMIN TRUMBULL, D. D."

"In June [1760,] the general [Amherst] commenced his march from Schenectady, with the main army, and proceeded by the Mohawk and Oneida rivers to Oswego.

"After a detachment had been sent foward to remove obstructions in the river St. Lawrence, and to find the best place for the passage of the boats and vessels, the army embarked and passed the lake [Ontario] without any misfortune. The general *receiving intelligence that one of the enemy's vessels was aground and disabled*, and that another lay off La Gallette, determined, with the utmost dispatch, to go down the river and attack Oswegatchie and Isle Royal.

"On the 17th of August, the row-galleys fell in with the French sloop commanded by M. de la Broquerie, who, *after a smart engagement*, surrendered to the English galleys. The enemy retired with great precipitation before the army, until it arrived in the neighborhood of Isle Royal. This was immediately so completely invested, that the garrison had no means of es-

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caping. By the 23d, two batteries were opened against the fort, and it was cannonaded by these, in concert with the row-galleys in the river. Dispositions having been made for a general attack, M. Pouchant, the commander, beat a parley, and surrendered the fort on terms of capitulation.

"When the necessary preparations had been made, Gen. Amherst proceeded down the river." Vol. 2, p. 423.

AN ABSTRACT OF MAJ. MANTE'S ACCOUNT OF THE EXPEDITION AGAINST MONTREAL.

"The necessary preparations having been made to bring the whole power of the British forces in North America against Montreal, in order to finish by its reduction the war in that part of the world, and the season being sufficiently advanced to enable Sir Jeffery Amherst, the commander-in-chief, to commence his part of the operations, he embarked at New York on the 2d of May, 1760, and proceeded to Schenectady. From thence, with part of his army, he pursued his route to Oswego, where he encamped on the 9th of July. The remainder he ordered to follow with the greatest diligence, under the command of Brigadier Gage. On the 14th, two vessels hove in sight on Lake Ontario, which proved to be those that had been fitted out at Niagara, under the command of Capt. Loring. Boats were immediately dispatched to him with orders to look out for, and attack the French vessels cruising on the lake. On the 20th, two other vessels appeared, and proved to be the French vessels which had escaped Capt. Loring's vigilance. On the 22d, Brigadier Gage arrived with the rear of the army; as did Sir William Johnson, on the 23d, with a party of Indians. On the 24th, the general received intelligence, that the French vessels had escaped into the river St. Lawrence, and that Capt. Loring was returning with the Onondaga of sixteen, and the Mohawk of eighteen six-pounders.

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"On the 5th of August, the general ordered the army to be in readiness to embark. It amounted to 10,142 effective men, officers included. The Indians under Sir William Johnson were 706.

"On the 7th, Capt. Loring sailed with his two vessels; but having mistaken the channel from the lake to the river St. Lawrence, the army passed him, while he was endeavoring to extricate himself. On the 13th, the whole army gained the Point de Barril, in the neighborhood of the post called La Gallette, which Brigadier Gage was ordered to destroy the preceding year. Here the enemy had a very good dock, in which they built their vessels. The grenadiers and light infantry, with the row-galleys, took post that day without halting, at Oswegatchie, a few miles below the Point de Barril.

"All this while, one of the enemy's vessels kept hovering about the army; and, as Capt. Loring had not yet got into the right channel, it became necessary for the safety of the army, either to compel this vessel to retire, or to take her. [But one of the two vessels appearing, is a confirmation of Dr. Trumbull's report, that one was aground and disabled.] The general was, therefore, obliged to order Col. Williamson, with the row-galleys, well manned, to do one or the other. On the 17th, the galleys advanced with the utmost intrepidity, under a very heavy fire from the enemy; but it did not in the least damp the ardor of the assailants; their fire was returned with such resolution and bravery, that, after a severe contest of about *four hours*, the French vessel struck her colors. She mounted ten twelve-pounders; and had on board one hundred men, twelve of whom were killed or wounded. Two of Col. Williamson's detachment were killed, and three wounded. The general immediately named the vessel the Williamson, in honor of the colonel, and to perpetuate the memory of so gallant an action. The same day the army proceeded to Oswegatchie, from whence

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it was necessary to reconnoiter Isle Royal, so that it was noon the next day before the army could proceed.

"Fort Levi stood upon this island, which was otherwise strongly fortified. Though the reduction of Fort Levi could be of little service, merely as a fort, yet it was certainly of too much consequence to be left in the rear of an army; besides, the number of pilots, perfectly acquainted with the intricate navigation of the river St. Lawrence, which the taking of the garrison prisoners would afford, was alone a sufficient motive for attacking it. It was, therefore, invested that very evening. Whilst the English were passing the point, the French kept up a very smart cannonade on them, and destroyed one of the row-galleys, and a few boats, and killed two or three men; but notwithstanding this fire, and an uninterrupted continuance of it, the fort was so completely invested by the 20th, by the masterly disposition of the troops, as to make it impossible for the garrison to escape.

"Capt. Loring had arrived the day before with his two vessels, and the Williamson brig; and the batteries being now ready, the general, on the 23d, determined to assault the fort, that as little time as possible might be wasted on it. He, therefore, ordered the vessels to fall down the stream, post themselves as close to the fort as possible, and man their tops well, in order to fire upon the enemy, and prevent their making use of their guns; whilst the grenadiers rowed in with their broadswords and tomahawks, fascines and scaling-ladders, [*not a wide plank, twenty feet in length,*] under cover of three hundred of the light infantry, who were to fire into the embrasures. The grenadiers received their orders with a cheerfulness that might be regarded as a sure omen of success; and, with their usual alacrity, prepared for the attack, waiting in their *shirts* till the ships could take their proper stations. This the Williamson brig, commanded by Lieut. Sin-

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clair, and the Mohawk by Lieut. Phipps, soon did. But the Onondaga, in which was Capt. Loring, by some extraordinary blunder, ran aground. The enemy discovering her distress, plied her with such unceasing showers of great and small arms, that Capt. Loring thought proper to strike his colors, and sent Thornton, his master, on shore to the enemy, who endeavored to take possession of the vessel; but by Col. Williamson's observing it, he turned upon them a battery, which obliged them to desist from the undertaking. The general then ordered Lieut. Sinclair, from the Williamson brig, and Lieut. Pennington, with two detachments of grenadiers under their command, to take possession of the Onondaga; and they obeyed their orders with such undaunted resolution, that the English colors were again hoisted on board her. But the vessel, after all, could not be got off; and was, therefore, abandoned about midnight. The English batteries, however, put a stop to any future attempt of the enemy to board her. Capt. Loring being wounded, was in the mean time sent ashore. . This accident of the Onondaga's running aground, obliged the general to defer his plan of assault; but this delay proved rather a fortunate event, as it saved a good deal of blood; for on the 25th, M. Pouchot, the commandant, beat a parley, demanding what terms he might expect; to which no other answer was returned, than that the fort must be immediately given up, and the garrison surrendered prisoners of war; and but ten minutes were given for a reply. These terms were received within the ten minutes; and Lieut. Col. Massey, with the grenadiers, immediately took possession of the place. The loss of the English before it, was twenty-one men killed, and nineteen wounded. The first shot from the English battery killed the French officer of artillery. Eleven more were killed afterwards, and about forty wounded. The garrison, all but the pilots, for the sake of whom chiefly the place had been attacked, were sent to New

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York; and the general named the fort, Fort William Augustus.

"Till the 30th, the army was employed in levelling the batteries, and repairing boats and rafts for the artillery, which was now embarked with the necessary stores; and, on the 31st, the general, with the first division of the army, embarked, and in the evening reached the Isle Aux-Chats, having passed the first rapids. * * * *

"On the 4th of September, about noon, the van of the army entered the Cedar-falls; and, for want of sufficient precaution, twenty-nine boats belonging to regiments, seventeen whaleboats, and one row galley, were dashed to pieces, with the loss of eighty-eight men. * * * On the 6th, the army embarked at La Chine, on the island of Montreal, about nine miles from the city; which the general immediately marched to, and that night invested; the French army having retired into it. The next day, the following letters [omitted] passed between the two generals, and ended in a capitulation, which was signed on the 8th of September, 1760."

See also Marshall's Life of Washington, and Macauley's History of the State of New York; which concur with the foregoing. In none of these authorities do we hear any thing of Lieut. Col. Putnam, with his *beetle and wedges, and wide plank, twenty feet in length;* which shows, that the story, as related by Humphreys, is a complete sham. Mr. Peabody follows him, giving full credit to the relation.

Beetle and wedges, to be sure, might easily be manufactured, but where were the planks to come from? Surely the expedition was not incumbered with this material in anticipation of Col. Putnam's project. The whole affair appears to be a complete hoax; and must have been intended by Putnam (if indeed he made to his biographer the communication as above stated) merely to test the extent of human credulity.

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Although a general peace among the European powers was ratified in 1763, yet the savages on our western frontiers still continued their hostilities. After they had taken several posts, Gen. Bradstreet was sent, in 1764, with an army, against them. Col. Putnam, then, for the first time, appointed to the command of a regiment, was on the expedition.

Upon the arrival of Gen. Bradstreet, the savages saw that all further efforts, in arms, would be vain, and accordingly, after many fallacious proposals for a peace, and frequent tergiversations in the negotiation, they concluded a treaty, which ended the war in America.

Col. Putnam, at the expiration of ten years from his first receiving a commission, after having seen as much service, endured as many hardships, encountered as many dangers, and acquired as many laurels as any officer of his rank, with great satisfaction laid aside his uniform, and returned to his plough.

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CHAPTER IV.

The author, after bringing the career of Putnam in the Canadian war to a close, gives a brief history of the causes which produced the American revolution; and observes:

As Putnam happened to be often at Boston, he held many conversations, on these subjects, with Gen. Gage, the British commander-in-chief, Lord Percy, Col. Sheriff, Col. Small, and many officers with whom he had formerly served, who were now at the head-quarters. Being often questioned, "In case the dispute should proceed to hostilities, what part he would really take?" he always answered, "With his country; and that, let whatever might happen, he was prepared to abide the consequence."

At length the fatal day arrived, when hostilities commenced. Gen. Gage, in the evening of the 18th of April, 1775, detached from Boston the grenadiers and light infantry of the army, commanded by Lieut. Col. Smith, to destroy some military and other stores deposited by the province at Concord.

After giving a concise account of this affair, the author proceeds:

Nothing could exceed the celerity with which the intelligence flew everywhere, that blood had been shed by the British troops. The country, in motion, exhibited but one scene of hurry, preparation, and revenge. Putnam, who was ploughing when he heard the news, left his plough in the middle of the field, unyoked his team, and *without waiting to change his clothes*, set off for the theatre of action.* But

* Col. Swett says: "On the first news of the battle of Lexington, Putnam mounted his horse, rode in a single day *one hundred miles*, arrived at

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finding the British retreated to Boston, and invested by a sufficient force to watch their movements, he came back to Connecticut, levied a regiment, under authority of the legislature, and speedily returned to Cambridge. He was now promoted to be a major-general on the provincial staff, by his colony; and, in a little time, confirmed by congress, in the same rank on the continental establishment. Gen. Ward, of Massachusetts, by common consent, commanded the whole; and the celebrated Dr. Warren was made a major-general.

Not long after this period, the British commander-in-chief found the means to convey a proposal, privately, to Gen. Putnam, that if he would relinquish the rebel party, he might rely upon being made a major-general on the British establishment, and receiving a great pecuniary compensation for his services. Gen, Putnam spurned at the offer; which, however, he thought prudent at that time to conceal from public notice.

According to Mr. Peabody, Putnam "received from the assembly of Connecticut a commission as brigadier-general."—In a "History of Massachusetts, from 1764 to July, 1775," by Alden Bradford, secretary of the commonwealth, (Boston, 1822,) in treating of the battle of Bunker Hill, the author says: "Col. Israel Putnam, of Connecticut, afterwards a major-general in the continental army, was on the field of action, towards the close of the engagement, but had no *specific command.* The whole expedition was one of sudden undertaking; and the only regular and distinct designation was that of Prescott, who had command of the troops which took possession of the ground on the evening of the 16th. His activity and courage would have done honor to the most celebrated veteran in the British army." (p. 386.)

Mr. Bradford, from his situation, had the means of

Cambridge, and attended a council of war on the 21st of April, when the parole was Putnam."—(Orderly book.)

Professor Sparks, however, in his Lectures on History, says that Putnam, before leaving home, put on his *military coat.* But this, I believe, remains a mooted question.

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acquiring the most accurate information of this matter; and, in fact, all the circumstances related by the various writers on the subject lead to the conclusion to which he arrives. Mr. Peabody, however, endeavors to palm Gen. Putnam upon the public as the chief in this glorious action, so honorable to the man who actually commanded, and his brave associates who fought the battle. He says; "We have thus far refrained from saying any thing of the particular command allotted to Putnam on this occasion. In the work to which we have just referred, [Col. Swett's Sketch of the battle of Bunker Hill,] he is mentioned as having the general control and superintendence of the expedition; and this opinion is supported by the following considerations. He was the only general officer who was present at the battle; and it is very improbable that the various detachments should have been left without a commander of the whole. He appears to have acted, throughout the battle and the previous arrangements for it, in this capacity. Such was the purport of his own *constant declarations*." Does his quitting the seat of action in the heat of battle, and making repeated visits to Cambridge, as asserted by Mr. Swett, to drum up reinforcements, accord with the duties of a commander? Would he not depute another officer for such service, for fear the battle might be lost for want of his presence. The absurdity of foisting him into the command is too glaring for argument. Gen. Putnam insinuated nothing of the kind to his biographer, Humphreys. All that is pretended, according to him, is that—"In this battle, the *presence* and *example* of Gen. Putnam, who arrived with the reinforcement, were not less *conspicuous* than *useful*." After the death of the general, his friends have undertaken to embellish his acts with facts that never occurred. Besides, he was not "the only general officer present at the battle." Gen. Warren was also present, and fought bravely; but neither of them had received orders to repair to the field of action;

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they were both volunteers, and consequently had no command. I find, however, after writing the above, that Mr. Bradford is mistaken in regard to the rank Putnam held at the time as a provincial officer. He had been recently appointed second brigadier-general; but being soon after made a major-general in the continental army, his title of brigadier was merged in that of major, and his occupancy of the former was probably little known.

The following document settles this question:

OFFICE OF SECRETARY OF STATE,
Hartford, Ct., Sept. 16, 1842.

DEAR SIR:—Your letter of the 21st ult., requesting information in relation to the rank held by Gen. Putnam, at the time of the battle of Bunker Hill, was duly received, and I regret that absence and other circumstances have hitherto prevented my earlier attention to the subject.

From a careful and thorough examination of the records of this (then) colony, as well as the records of the "Council of Safety" and of the "Pay-Table Office," I am enabled to say that the following statement comprises all the material facts appearing on these records in relation to this inquiry.

Previous to April, 1775, Gen. Putnam held the rank of lieutenant-colonel of a regiment of militia, to which office he was appointed in October, 1774.

At a special session of the General Assembly, held in the month of April, 1775, a public act was passed, directing that six regiments "be forthwith raised by enlistment, to continue in service for a term not exceeding seven months," and to be commanded by "one major-general, assisted by two brigadier generals,—*each of which general officers shall take the command of a regiment as colonel.*" The regiments consisted of ten companies of one hundred men each.

At the same session, to wit, April, 1775, appoint-

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ments were made of all the officers of this corps, among which are the following:

"This Assembly do appoint David Wooster, Esq., to be major-general.

"This Assembly do appoint Joseph Spencer, Esq., to be brigadier-general.

"This Assembly do appoint Israel Putnam, Esq., to be second brigadier-general."

"3d REGIMENT.

This Assembly do appoint Israel Putnam, Esq., to be colonel of the 3d regiment, and captain . . . } Of the 1st comp'y, 3d reg't."
Jonathan Kingsley, 1st lieutenant . . . }
Thomas Grosvenor, 2d lieutenant . . . }
Elijah Loomis, ensign . . . . . }

Each of the other general officers received a similar appointment to command a regiment and company. Probably this was the general practice in this state at that time.

I have been thus particular, that you might readily see the probable *cause* of the different statements made concerning the military rank of Gen. Putnam, at the engagement on Bunker Hill. He was a brigadier-general at the time; but as he also commanded the 3d regiment, which he is *supposed* to have led into the engagement, it has erroneously been supposed by some persons that his rank was only that of a colonel.

I might add, that Gen. Putnam never had from this state the appointment of major-general: that rank he had from the continental congress, as you are doubtless aware, soon after the battle of Bunker Hill.

I am, &c.,

NOAH A. PHELPS,
Secretary of State.

TO JOHN FELLOWS, Esq., *New York.*

Putnam was appointed a major-general by the congress before the battle of Bunker Hill, but had no notice of it till the 2d of July, when he received the commission. The supposition that "Putnam *led his regi-*

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ment into the engagement" is erroneous. One hundred and twenty of his regiment, says Col. Swett, were detached for this service, and put under the command of Col. Prescott.

It is seen by the foregoing that Putnam, a second brigadier-general in the Connecticut establishment, is advanced, by the continental congress, over the heads of two generals of superior rank in the same province. And it will appear hereafter, that this arose from the supposed heroic conduct of the former in a skirmish at Hog and Noddle islands, in which he took no part, not being on either of these islands at the time of its occurrence, but on the main, probably over a mile from the scene of action.

In regard to the attempt made by the British commander to detach Gen. Putnam from the American cause, Col. Swett, upon what authority he does not inform us, states it to have taken place after the battle of Bunker Hill, and the proposal to come from Sir William Howe; whereas, according to Col. Humphreys, who had the best means of obtaining correct information, it occurred during the command of Gen. Gage, the old acquaintance of Putnam. Sir William Howe did not arrive at Boston till September.

But will it be credited, that either of those generals would have presumed to recommend to their government the appointment of Putnam to the rank of major-general over their own generals, so much his superior in education and talents? That a pecuniary reward was offered for his treachery, cannot be doubted. But why was it thought proper to keep this matter a secret at the time; the sure means, when known, to create a suspicion of an understanding between the parties? A similar attempt was made to tamper with Gen. Charles Lee; and the following statement shows the prudent course he adopted upon the occasion.

Gen. Burgoyne and Gen. Lee had served together in Portugal, and an intimate friendship of long standing

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subsisted between them. When the former arrived at Boston, Gen. Lee wrote a letter to his friend, filled with invective against the British court and cabinet, setting forth the injustice of their proceedings in regard to the colonies. This letter was received in good part, and answered by Gen. Burgoyne in terms of courtesy, on the 8th of July, after it was known to him that Gen. Lee had joined the American camp. In closing his letter, he proposed an interview with his friend at Brown's house, on Boston Neck, a little within the British advanced sentries, pledging his parole of honor for the safe return of Gen. Lee, and soliciting the same for himself. This invitation Gen. Lee was inclined to accept; but, not choosing to do it without the sanction of the civil authority, he laid the matter before the provincial congress of Massachusetts, saying: "If they approve it, he must request that they will depute some one gentleman of their body to accompany him, and be witness to the conversation." To which the congress answered:

"Sir,—The congress have perused the letter from Gen. Burgoyne, which you were kind enough to submit to their inspection. They can have no objection to the proposed interview, from any want of the highest confidence in the wisdom, discretion, and integrity of Gen. Lee; but, as the confidence of the people in their generals is so essentially necessary to the well-conducting of the enterprise in which we are engaged, and as a people contending for their liberties are naturally disposed to jealousy, and not inclined to make the most favorable construction of the motives of conduct, which they are not fully acquainted with, they beg leave to suggest whether such an interview might not have a tendency to lessen the influence, which the congress would wish to extend to the utmost of their power to facilitate the operations of war. The congress, agreeably to your request, and to prevent as far as we are able any disagreeable consequences, which

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may arise from the jealousy of the people on such an occasion, have appointed Mr. Elbridge Gerry to attend you at the proposed interview, if you shall think proper to proceed in it; and, as they do not think themselves authorized to counteract the general's inclination, they would submit it to his opinion whether the advice of a council of war might not be taken in a matter of such apparent delicacy." (MS. Journal, July 10th.)

These hints had their effect on the mind of Gen. Lee, and he wrote a complimentary note to Gen. Burgoyne, the next day, declining the interview. (Sparks' Washington, vol. 3, p. 498.)

The first attention had been prudently directed towards forming some little redoubts and intrenchments; for it was well known that lines, however slight or untenable, were calculated to inspire raw soldiers with a confidence in themselves. The next care was to bring the live-stock from the islands in Boston bay, in order to prevent the enemy (already surrounded by land) from making use of them for fresh provisions. In the latter end of May, between two and three hundred men were sent to drive off the stock from Hog and Noddle islands, which are situated on the north-east side of Boston harbor. Advantage having been taken of the ebb-tide, when the water is fordable between the main and Hog island, as it is between that and Noddle island, the design was effected. But a skirmish ensued, in which some of the marines, who had been stationed to guard them, were killed: and as the firing continued between the British water-craft and our party, a reinforcement of three hundred men, with two pieces of artillery, was ordered to join the latter. Gen. Putnam *took the command*, and having himself gone down on the beach, within conversing distance, and *ineffectually* ordered the people on board an armed schooner to strike, he plied her with shot so furiously that the crew made their escape, and the vessel was burnt. An armed sloop was likewise so much disabled as to be towed off by the boats of the fleet. Thus ended this affair, in which several hundred sheep and some cattle were removed from under the muzzles of the enemy's cannon, and our men, *ac-*

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customed to stand fire, by being for *many hours exposed to it, without meeting with any loss.*

Here we have a like bungling story, a *fac-simile* of that related above respecting the two French vessels on the river St. Lawrence. In the present case, one of the vessels in question ran aground in the night, and was consequently abandoned, but not on account of the battering received by Putnam's cannonade; nor was any other vessel so much disabled, through the same means, as to be towed off by the boats of the *fleet*, as here stated. In fact, it is incredible that a party of militia, with two pieces of artillery, without any cover, at hailing distance from two armed vessels, could accomplish the feats pretended. Nothing but enchantment or witchcraft could have produced such a result. A broadside fire from one of the vessels would have caused terrible havoc among three hundred men thus situated. But fortunately for them, they were not in reach of the cannon of those vessels, which were at Hog or Noddle island.

The manner in which this story is related shows it to be deceptive. A party of three hundred men are ordered on a particular service, without designating the officer who should take command of them, and in default thereof, Putnam assumes it. Neither are the men who were to compose this detachment pointed out. Did this pretended reinforcement fulfil the orders it is said to have received, to *join* the party employed in removing the cattle, &c., from the islands mentioned? By no means. They went down to the beach, and made some bluster and noise, by firing two pieces of artillery, probably towards the islands. No reinforcement appears to have been necessary, a sufficient number of men having been sent in the first instance for the purpose intended, who executed their mission as required.

It is not difficult to account for the origin of this notable affair of the *reinforcement*. The people in the neighborhood of those islands, hearing the roar of can-

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non, ran down to the beach, from mere curiosity, to ascertain the cause; and, at the suggestion of somebody, two field-pieces were procured, and occasionally fired, in defiance of the enemy, but without doing harm to any one; nor were they in a situation to be injured themselves, as the result proved. Gen. Putnam cunningly claimed the command of this redoubtable party, which nobody disputed, for no one knew who commanded, or that there was any commander at all. And that there could not have been any regular command, is evident from the nature of the case. It must have been a helter-skelter assemblage of men and boys, brought together from the cause above stated; and which could not, by reason of its composition, be reduced to order; nor was it necessary, for they had nothing to do requiring concert of action.

After all, the whole of this affair was but a small matter, a mere skirmish. Neither Gordon nor Marshall take any notice of it.

Paul Allen, however, in his history of the revolution, instead of giving to Putnam the command of the reinforcement, pretended to have been ordered, which was all that Putnam claimed, and which advanced, by his own account, no further than to the beach on the main, transfers him to the command of the militia on Hog and Noddle islands; thinking, perhaps, the command, assumed by him, not of sufficient consequence for the general. In other respects, the statement of Mr. Allen bears the impress of authenticity. He says:

"Various parties of militia, under the orders of the provincial congress, had been engaged in frequent skirmishes with the British foraging parties from Boston. It was considered as a matter of great importance that the British should be deprived of the supplies of stock and other articles of provision, which abounded on the islands in Boston harbor. For this purpose Gen. Putnam with a party of six hundred men, in their attempts to bring off the stock and destroy the hay on

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one of the islands, were opposed by a party of marines from Boston, who were supported by several armed vessels and barges. A warm action commenced, which continued through the whole of a *dark night;* and one of the *vessels running aground,* the British in the morning were compelled to abandon her, and make their escape."

Mr. Allen shows that the contention for the stock, &c., on the islands in Boston harbor, was between the British troops and the Massachusetts militia, acting under the orders of their provincial congress. This was before any continental army had been put into a state of organization. Putnam had just arrived at Cambridge from Connecticut, and is it probable that the militia of Massachusetts would be immediately put under his command?

The late Gen. Dearborn informed an acquaintance of the writer, that he was with the party, about five hundred men, who were engaged on the memorable occasion in question; that they were on the islands a day and a half; that skirmishing was kept up almost the whole time, and that he then thought the fighting, it being his first essay, most tremendous. It turned out, however, he said, not so terrible as he had imagined, the Americans having only one man killed, and three wounded. He saw Putnam on the beach, as the party were passing over to the islands.

Out of this mighty affair, Gen. Putnam contrived to create a large capital; for, by means of it, he was made a major-general. It was immediately bruited about the country, by whose instrumentality may easily be imagined, that Putnam was the hero of that renowned, eventful day, and that his bravery and skill in military affairs were unsurpassed. The congress thereupon appointed him a major-general in the continental service, as the following letter shows:

Extract of a letter from Roger Sherman to Gen. David Wooster, dated Philadelphia, June 23, 1775:

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"DEAR SIR,—The congress, having determined it necessary to keep up an army for the defence of America at the charge of the united colonies, have appointed the following general officers: George Washington, Esq., commander-in-chief; major-generals, Ward, Lee, Schuyler, and Putnam; brigadier-generals, Pomeroy, Montgomery, yourself, Heath, Spencer, Thomas, Sullivan, of New Hampshire, and one Green, of Rhode Island. I am sensible that, according to your former rank, you were entitled to the place of a major-general; and as one was to be appointed in Connecticut, I heartily recommended you to the congress. I informed them of the *arrangement made by our assembly*, which I thought would be satisfactory to have *them continued in the same order*. But as Gen. Putnam's fame was spread abroad, and especially *his successful enterprise at Noddle's island*, the account of which had just arrived, it gave him the preference in the opinion of the delegates in general, so that his appointment was unanimous among the colonies; but, from your known abilities and firm attachment to the American cause, we were very desirous of your continuance in the army, and hope you will accept of the appointment made by the congress. I suppose a commission is sent to you by Gen. Washington." (Davis's Mem. A. Burr, vol. 1, p. 59.)

The reception of Putnam's appointment by the officers of the army, and its consequences, are set forth in the following letter from the commander-in-chief:

Extract of a letter from Gen. Washington to the president of congress:

"Camp at Cambridge, 10th of July, 1775.

"I am very sorry to observe, that the appointment of general officers, in the provinces of Massachusetts and Connecticut, has not corresponded with the wishes and judgment of either the civil or military. The great dissatisfaction expressed on this subject, and the appa-

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rent danger of throwing the whole army into the utmost disorder, together with the strong representations made by the provincial congress, have induced me to retain the commissions in my hands until the pleasure of the continental congress should be further known; except Gen. Putnam's, which was given the day I came to the camp, [July 2d,] and before I was apprised of these disgusts. In such a step, I must beg the congress will do me the justice to believe that I have been actuated solely by a regard to the public good.

"I have not, nor could I have, any private attachments; every gentleman in appointment was a stranger to me, but from character. I must, therefore, rely upon the candor and indulgence of congress for their most favorable construction of my conduct in this particular. Gen. Spencer's disgust was so great at Gen. Putnam's promotion, that he left the army without visiting me, or making known his intention in any respect." (Sparks' Washington, v. iii. p. 17.)

The provincial generals having received advice that the British commander-in-chief designed to take possession of the heights on the peninsula of Charlestown, detached a thousand men in the night of the 16th of June, under the orders of Gen. Warren, to intrench themselves upon one of these eminences, named Bunker Hill.

It is strange that Col. Humphreys, the aid-de-camp of Gen. Putnam, and afterwards of Gen. Washington, should not have known that Gen. Warren had no command on this eventful occasion. The author, after giving a short account of the conflict which ensued on the 17th, observes:

In this battle, the presence and example of Gen. Putnam, who arrived with *the reinforcement, were not less conspicuous than useful.* He did every thing that an intrepid and experienced officer could accomplish. The enemy pursued to Winter Hill—*Putnam made a stand, and drove them back under cover of their ships.*

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It is, however, affirmed, and I believe fully proved, as will hereafter appear, that Gen. Putnam's *presence* and *example*, upon the occasion, was not on the battle field, at Breed's Hill, but at Bunker Hill proper, among those who took no part in the contest. Putnam's *reinforcements*, unfortunately, never came into action. That "he did every thing that an intrepid and experienced officer could accomplish," means nothing,—specification is wanting; and, that he *drove the British from Winter Hill, under cover of their ships, is decidedly untrue.*

"On the retreat from Bunker Hill, our troops took post upon the heights in the neighborhood; the regiment of Stark on Winter Hill. The night succeeding the battle and the following day were passed in the labor of intrenching; but the experience of the 19th of April and the 17th of June deterred the British troops from any repetition of the attempt to penetrate into the interior, in this portion of the country." (Everett's Life of Stark, p. 65.)

Indeed, the editor of the edition of 1818 of Humphreys' Life of Putnam, acknowledges the error, stating, that "there was no pursuit of the British beyond Bunker Hill."

The premature death of Warren, one of the most illustrious patriots that ever bled in the cause of freedom; the veteran appearance of Putnam, collected, yet ardent in action; together with the astonishing scenery and interesting groupe around Bunker Hill, rendered this a magnificent subject for the historic pencil. Accordingly Trumbull, formerly an aid-de-camp to Gen. Washington, afterwards deputy-adjutant-general of the northern army, now an artist of great celebrity in Europe, hath finished this picture with that boldness of conception, and those touches of art which demonstrate the master. Heightened in horror by the flames of a burning town, and the smoke of conflicting armies, the principal scene, taken the moment when Warren fell, represents that hero in the agonies of death, a grenadier on the point of bayoneting him, and Col. Small, to whom he was familiarly known, arresting the soldier's arms; at the head of the Brit-

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ish line, Maj. Pitcairne is seen falling dead into the arms of his son; and not far distant Gen. Putnam is placed at the rear of our retreating troops, in the light-blue and scarlet uniform he wore that day, with his head uncovered, and his sword waving towards the enemy, as it were to stop their impetuous pursuit. In nearly the same attitude he is exhibited by Barlow in that excellent poem, the Vision of Columbus.

> 'There strides bold Putnam, and from all the plains
> Calls the third host, the tardy rear sustains,
> And, 'mid the whizzing deaths that fill the air,
> Waves back his sword, and dares the foll'wing war.'"

The painter has here evidently taken his cue in part from the poet. But whether Gen. Putnam had taken any part in the action or not, to exhibit him in this blustering, gasconading attitude, when retiring from the enemy, does not, in my opinion, redound to his credit, nor to the good taste of either the writer or the artist, notwithstanding their acknowledged superior merits.

The manner in which this picture was concocted is singular, and worthy of notice. Col. Trumbull, it seems, had almost completed a painting of this battle, when he unfortunately met with Col. Small of the British army, who advised him to change his plan, under a pretence that justice had not been done to his (Small's) friend, as he called him, Gen. Putnam. The alteration proposed, by the way, gave Small himself a most conspicuous and honorable position. As it introduced a very imposing figure into the group, tending to render the painting popular, Col. Trumbull, perhaps, the more readily adopted the suggestion, and thereby spoiled his picture, by reason of its giving a false historical representation.

The agency of Col. Small in this matter would seem to have remained secret till 1818, when the action of Putnam at the Bunker Hill battle became a subject of controversy. This drew from Col. Trumbull the fol-

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lowing communication, addressed to Col. Daniel Putnam, son of the general:

In the summer of 1786 I became acquainted in London with Col. John Small, of the British army, who had served in America many years, and had known Gen. Putnam intimately during the war of Canada from 1756 to 1763. From him, I had the two following anecdotes respecting the battle of Bunker Hill; I shall nearly repeat his words; looking at the picture which I had almost completed, he said: "I do not like the situation in which you have placed my old friend Putnam; you have not done him justice. I wish you would alter that part of your picture, and introduce a circumstance which actually happened, and which I can never forget. When the British troops advanced the second time to the attack of the redoubt, I, with other officers, was in front of the line to encourage the men; we had advanced very near the works undisturbed, when an irregular fire, like a feu-de-joie, was poured in upon us; it was cruelly fatal. The troops fell back, and when I looked to the right and left, I saw not one officer standing; I glanced my eye to the enemy, and saw several young men levelling their pieces at me; I knew their excellence as marksmen, and considered myself gone. At that moment my old friend Putnam rushed forward, and striking up the muzzles of their pieces with his sword, cried out—'For God's sake, my lads, don't fire at that man—I love him as I do my brother.' We were so near each other that I heard his words distinctly. He was obeyed; I bowed, thanked him, and walked away unmolested."

The other anecdote relates to the death of Gen. Warren:

At the moment when the troops succeeded in carrying the redoubt, and the Americans were in full retreat, Gen. Howe, (who had been hurt by a spent ball which bruised his ankle) was leaning on my arm. He called suddenly to me: "Do you see that elegant young man who has just fallen? Do you know him?" I looked to the spot towards which he pointed—"Good God, sir, I believe it is my friend Warren." "Leave me then instantly—run—keep off the troops, save him if possible." I flew to the spot: "My dear friend," I said to him, "I hope you are not badly hurt;" he looked up, seemed to

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recollect me, smiled, and died! a musket ball had passed through the upper part of his head.

JOHN TRUMBULL.

DANIEL PUTNAM, esq.

If the first anecdote here narrated were true, it would cast an indelible stain upon the character of Gen. Putnam. There was neither humanity nor patriotism exhibited in the act, but the reverse of both. What! an American officer, from private friendship, grant such favor to an enemy on the field of battle, as to put to hazard the vital interests of his country, its liberty! Such a course might have been the means of sacrificing the lives of many Americans, and even of turning the scale of victory in favor of the enemy. Why was not this man ordered to surrender, and thereby save his life? He is permitted to *walk away unmolested*, again to rally his troops and make another onset; which, according to the story, he did, and was successful.

But I believe it will appear evident, in the sequel, that both these reports are unfounded. In the first place, that Putnam was not personally engaged in the battle; and, in the second place, that Warren fell out of view of any British officer.

Col. Swett adopts both these anecdotes; and, after giving that respecting Small's being suffered to escape, says: "The general's *humane* and *chivalrous generosity* excited in them [those who had leveled their muskets at Col. Small] new admiration, and his friend retired unhurt."

As I look upon this statement to be an absolute fraud, and, therefore, that no information was derived from those engaged in the battle, I must suppose the writer to have anticipated what he thought would naturally follow in such case, a liberty often taken by historians. But as to this, I beg leave to differ with him. I believe the brave men who took part in that memorable contest had too much self-respect to applaud such mawkish civility to a British officer, at the imminent risk of

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their own lives, as well as that of the cause of their country. The occasion was too critical to admit the exercise of chivalrous acts towards the enemy, and thereby hazard the loss of the battle.*

Mr. Peabody gives credit to the story, in regard to the favor shown to Small, but is silent on that of his pretended attempt to save the life of Gen. Warren.—If the former of these anecdotes were true, would not Gen. Putnam have been apt to inform his biographer of the circumstance? And would not such kindness and generosity, of which we hear so much in the Life of Putnam, been blazoned forth to the world in capitals? Would not those whose *pieces* were thus striken up, as well as others who must have seen the transaction, have been likely to tell the story? Was there none but Col. Small who would venture to relate it? What was the length of Putnam's sword? and how many muskets could he have struck up? for there must have been many pointed at Small, he being the only man left standing of the enemy, in that particular location of the action. The difficulties of giving these anecdotes any thing like the appearance of reality are insurmountable. The one seems to have been formed for the benefit of Gen. Putnam, and the other, to be dovetailed into it, in order to make out a neat romantic affair, and give a *quid pro quo*, for the benefit of Col. Small; and thereby furnish a good subject for the painter.

The controversy respecting the conduct of Gen. Putnam, at the battle of Bunker Hill, appears to have originated principally from an article on that battle, written by the late Gen. Dearborn, and published in 1818; although there were other accounts of the bat-

* An instance of gallantry of this kind happened in a battle, in the peninsula of Spain, in the time of the French revolutionary war. Two officers, a Frenchman and an Englishman, came in contact, and the former had raised his sword to cut down his adversary, when perceiving him to be unarmed, having but one hand, with which he guided his horse, the Frenchman bowed very civilly, and passed him by. The English, however, gained the victory, and, perhaps, the one-armed officer was very instrumental in producing the result.

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tle, written previously, by general officers of the revolutionary army, which censure Gen. Putnam for his delinquency on that memorable occasion.

Gen. Dearborn, I understand, kept a record of his military life, noting such occurrences of importance as came under his observation. This record, of course, contained an account of Bunker Hill battle, where he commanded a company, in Col. John Stark's regiment. This account, it seems, was abstracted from the journal, and first appeared in a periodical, entitled the Port Folio, published at Philadelphia. This brought forward Col. Daniel Putnam, son of Gen. Putnam, with a counter statement, endeavoring to prove Gen. Dearborn's account incorrect. At length the dispute took a political party complexion, abuse was substituted for reason, and truth no longer considered essential to the support of argument. The cause that gave this turn to the controversy will hereafter be explained.

This article of Gen. Dearborn, with testimony adduced in its support, including extracts from the writings of others on the same subject, were printed in a pamphlet form, at Portland, N. H., in 1835, entitled, A History of the Battle of Breed's Hill. From this publication I propose to extract such portion as may be immediately applicable to the investigation I have undertaken.

Having introduced the communication of Col. Small, I will, in the first place, copy two documents on that subject. That of Capt. Trevett goes to show the improbability, at least, that any intimacy existed between Putnam and Small. He says:

I commanded a company of artillery from the town of Marblehead, attached to Col. Richard Gridley's regiment, stationed at Cambridge. About one o'clock in the afternoon of the 17th of June, 1775, I left Cambridge with my company, for Bunker Hill. When about a quarter of a mile from the colleges, I saw Gen. Putnam pass upon a horse towards the town of Cambridge, and in fifteen or twenty min-

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utes I saw him pass in like manner towards Charlestown. When I arrived at Bunker Hill, on the northwest side, I there saw Gen. Putnam dismounted, in company with several others. I halted my company, and went forward to select a station for my pieces, and on my return, saw Gen. Putnam as before; the American and English forces being then engaged. I proceeded on with my company, and soon after joined that part of the American force at the rail fence, towards Mystic river, when the Americans commenced a general retreat. As I was descending the northwest side of Bunker Hill, I again saw Gen. Putnam in the same place, putting his tent upon his horse. I asked him where I should retreat with the field-piece I had brought off: he replied, to Cambridge, and I accordingly marched my company to Cambridge.

In the month of May or June, 1795, being in the island of Guernsey, I had occasion in the course of business to call upon Maj. (alias Col.) Small, the governor. After closing my business with him, he remarked that my countenance was not new to him, and inquired where he had seen me. I replied, that it must have been at Col. Ingersoll's tavern in Boston—and that I had once been opposed to him in action. He immediately entered into a free and general conversation on the battle of Bunker Hill,—but he made no inquiry after Gen. Putnam, nor did he in any way, either directly or indirectly, allude to him, either as a friend or an officer.

SAMUEL R. TREVETT.

Boston, June 2, 1818.

The testimony of Deacon Samuel Lawrence is directly in point, and puts this matter, so far as respects the death of Gen. Warren, at rest, beyond all cavil or controversy. And Col. Small's account of it, being thus proved to be at variance with fact, gives us a right to conclude his other anecdote to be alike unfounded. The deacon says:

I, Samuel Lawrence, of Groton, testify, that I was at the battle of Bunker Hill, in Col. William Prescott's regiment; that I marched with the regiment to the point on Breed's

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Hill, which was fixed on for a redoubt; that I assisted in throwing up the work, and in forming a redoubt, under Col. Prescott, who directed the whole of this operation. The work was begun about nine o'clock in the evening of June 16, 1775. I was there the whole time, and continued in the redoubt, or in the little fort, during the whole battle until the enemy came in and a retreat was ordered.

Gen. Putnam was not present either while the works were erecting, or during the battle. I could distinctly see the rail fence and the troops stationed there during the battle, but Gen. Putnam was not present as I saw. Just before the battle commenced, Gen. Warren came to the redoubt. He had on a blue coat, white waistcoat, and I think a cocked hat, but of this I am not certain—Col. Prescott advanced to him, said he was glad to see him, and hoped he would take the command. Gen. Warren replied, "No, he came to see the action, but not to take command; that he was only a volunteer on that day." Afterwards *I saw Gen. Warren shot; I saw him when the ball struck him, and from that time until he expired. No British officer was within forty or fifty rods of him, from the time the ball struck him until I saw he was dead.*

SAMUEL LAWRENCE.

Sworn to before Samuel Dana, Justice of the Peace, &c.

EXTRACTS FROM THE HISTORY OF THE BATTLE OF BREED'S HILL, ABOVE MENTIONED.

Memoirs of Maj. Gen. William Heath, (1798.)

Perhaps there never was a better fought battle than this, [of Bunker Hill,] all things considered; and too much praise can never be bestowed on the conduct of Col. William Prescott, who, notwithstanding any thing that may have been said, *was the proper commanding officer,* at the redoubt, and nobly acted his part as such, during the whole action.

Just before the action began, Gen. Putnam came to the redoubt, and told Col. Prescott that the intrenching tools must be sent off, *or they would be lost;* the colonel replied, that if he sent any of the men away with the tools, not one of them would return; to this the general answered, they shall every man return. A large party was then sent off

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with the tools, and not one of them returned; in this instance the colonel was the best judge of human nature. In the time of action, Col. Prescott observed that the brave Gen. Warren was near the works; he immediately stepped up to him, and asked him if he had any orders to give him. The general replied that he had none, that he exercised no command there. "The command," said the general, "is yours."

Maj. Gen. Henry Lee, in his Memoirs of the War, (1812,) says of the battle of Bunker Hill:

The military annals of the world rarely furnish an achievement which equals the firmness and courage displayed on that proud day by the gallant band of Americans; and it certainly stands first in the brilliant events of our war.

When future generations shall inquire where are the men who gained the highest prize of glory in the arduous contest which ushered in our nation's birth,—upon Prescott and his companions in arms will the eye of history beam.

A Sketch of the Battle of Breed's Hill, by Maj. Gen. James Wilkinson, (1816.)

The resolution of the provincial council of war being taken, Col. Prescott, a man of strong mind and dauntless resolution, who, I understand, had served in the seven years war as a provincial subaltern, seconded by a Col. Brewer, who also served in the same war as a sergeant of rangers, was ordered with one thousand Massachusetts men, to take possession of Bunker Hill, but whether by mistaking the spot, which seems improbable, Col. Prescott passed the crown of Bunker Hill about six hundred yards, and broke ground on Breed's Hill, about twelve hundred yards from the British battery on Cop's Hill in North Boston.

The British general was started by this encroachment, which left him no time to deliberate; for although Bunker Hill would have given little annoyance to Boston, Breed's Hill positively commanded the northern part of it. Maj. Gen. Howe, therefore, being first for duty, was ordered with ten companies of grenadiers, and ten of light infantry, and

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the 5th, 38th, 43d and 52d regiments, to dislodge the provincials; and on this service, seconded by Brigadier-General Pigot, he embarked in barges about noon, and rowed to Morton's point, the eastern extremity of the peninsula of Charlestown, and the present site of the navy yard of the United States, where he landed and formed without opposition; but disliking the disposition and aspect of the provincials, he ordered his troops to set down, and sent back to Boston for a reinforcement, to land and co-operate from the side of Charlestown; for which service the 47th regiment and 1st battalion of marines were detached; and yet this corps of Sir William Howe, composed of five regiments, one battalion, and twenty flank companies, has been generally reported at *about* two thousand men; but surely sixty-four companies, at least, cannot be reckoned for less than three thousand, and this number I shall claim, for the honor of Prescott and Stark, and the troops they commanded, which did not exceed fifteen hundred combatants. Gen. Howe halted at Morton's point, as well to arrange and refresh his corps for combat, as to wait the reinforcement; being perfectly concealed from observation in his front by the nature of the ground. Prescott, at the same time, manned his redoubt, and the retrenchment, and occupied the circumjacent ground in the most advantageous manner he could, with about eight hundred men out of the one thousand ordered for the service;* whilst Gen. Putnam and a Col. Gerrish took post with about fifteen hundred men, on and around Bunker Hill. In the mean time, Col. Stark, with his own regiment and that of Reed's from New Hampshire, amounting to about seven hundred men, half organized, and wretchedly equipped,† were pressing for the scene of action; Capt. H. Dearborn, lately a major-general, marched on Col. Stark's right, traversed the causeway under a heavy cross fire from floating batteries, and passed Gen. Putnam on Bunker Hill, with

* Two hundred men had been sent away with the intrenching tools, as above stated. (Edit. V. R.)

† The men were armed with fusils of various calibres, each individual was furnished with one quarter of a pound of powder in a horn, one flint, and lead sufficient to make fifteen charges, either of ball or buck-shot; the men prepared their ammunition according to their discretion, some with cartridges and others with loose ammunition; the powder in their horns, and the lead in their pockets.

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Col. Gerrish by his side, and one thousand or one thousand two hundred men under their orders. As this corps of citizen soldiers approached the redoubt under the cannonade of the enemy's batteries from Charles river, and Cop's Hill, Col. Stark determined to form his men behind the post and rail fences before described; but when he reached the bank of the Mystic, he cast his eyes down upon the beach, and as he observed to me on the spot, thought it was so plain a way that the enemy could not miss it; he therefore ordered a number of *his boys* to jump down the bank, and with stones from the adjacent walls, they soon threw up a strong breastwork to the water's edge, behind which he posted triple ranks of his choice men; in the mean time, those who formed in rear of the fences, to conceal themselves from the enemy, filled the space between the rails with grass and hay, behind which they either knelt or sat down, every man having made an aperture in the grassy rampart, through which, while resting his fusee, he could take deliberate aim.

Capt. Dearborn was posted with his company nearest the redoubt, on the right of Stark's line. About one o'clock Gen. Howe put two columns and a detachment with his artillery in motion; one column marched by the beach, and his light infantry led the other on the margin of the bank of the Mystic, and directly to the left of Col. Stark's line; the detachment and artillery, from the best information I have been able to procure, inclined towards his left, and commenced a feeble attack against the redoubt at long shot, apparently with a design to draw the attention of Col. Prescott, whilst the column on the beach, and that on the bank of the Mystic, were designed to turn the flank and gain the rear of the provincials on Breed's Hill, which they would have accomplished, if they had not been driven back. Col. Stark's orders to his men, who were concealed behind the stone wall on the beach, were not to fire until the front of the enemy reached a point which he had marked in the bank at eight or ten rods distance, and those on the bank immediately under his eye, were directed to reserve their fires until they could see the enemy's half gaiters, which from the form of the ground, would bring them within the same

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distance; in this situation of the provincials, the columns of the enemy on the beach and the bank advanced by heavy platoons, without firing, as if not apprised of what awaited them, and when within the prescribed distance, received a volley which mowed down the whole front ranks, and the columns were instantly broken and fell back in disorder, that on the beach, entirely out of the combat, having ninety-six* men killed outright, before they could escape the American fire; on the banks the light infantry fell back until covered by the ground, then re-formed, and again advanced to the attack, and were again repulsed with similar slaughter; three times were these brave unfortunate men led to the charge, and were finally repulsed.† Sir William Howe now gave up his first plan of attack, to force his way into the rear of the provincials, and making an entire new disposition, he directed his whole force against the redoubt, attacking it on three sides at the same time. Gen. Clinton, with the 47th regiment and the battalion of marines on the right; Gen. Pigot with the 5th, 38th and 43d regiments, in the center; and the commander, with the grenadiers and 52d regiment on the left; the light infantry appear to have been put *hors de combat.*

The retrenchment was turned on the left and entered by the grenadiers, but being exposed to the perpendicular fire of the redoubt and the oblique fire of Capt. Dearborn, they were obliged to abandon it. Assailed in his front and flank by three-fold numbers, Prescott persevered with great obstinacy and valor, until his ammunition was nearly expended, and the redoubt was forced by the grenadiers at the angle which joined the retrenchment. He was then obliged to give away, and his men retreated in disorder. After the third repulse of the light infantry, and whilst the attack was carried against the redoubt, Stark's men behind the post and rail fence near the Mystic were unassailed and unoccupied, and the scenes near the redoubt being obscured by the smoke, they were induced to retreat reluctantly after the work was

* Mr. John Winslow, then in Boston, I understand, counted that number the next day.

† I had these details from Col. Stark on the field, the 17th of March, 1776, and I remember his observing, "the dead lay as thick as sheep in a fold;" it was at this point the enemy suffered most severely.

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carried. If they had been thrown forward, where the light infantry finally gave way, to attack Sir William's right flank and rear, the issue of this conflict might have proved unfortunate for him; or if Gen. Putnam had moved up with Col. Gerrish and the men who remained stationary within six hundred yards of the combat, which lasted an hour and a half, the triumph of the provincials would have been decisive, and those of the British corps who were not killed must have surrendered, which would probably have terminated the contest, and prevented the disseverment of the British empire; but I understand from high authority, that it was in vain Col. Presçott sent messenger after messenger to entreat Gen. Putnam to come to his succor; he rode about Bunker Hill, while the battle raged under his eye, with a number of entrenching tools slung across his horse, but did not advance a step, and was passed, with Col. Gerrish at his side, by Stark and Dearborn, as they retreated, near the spot where they saw him when they advanced; and for this conduct Col. Prescott never ceased to reprobate the general.

This isolated sketch being intended as a mere record of facts little known, it may be proper to state, that between Prescott and Stark there was no preconcert or plan of cooperation: each fought his distinct corps, and defended his ground, according to his own judgment, and there was no general command exercised on the field; as soon as the men were stationed, every one reasoned and resolved for his country, under the direction of his own will. All the reinforcements which arrived at Bunker Hill after Col. Stark had passed, halted and kept company with Gen. Putnam and Col. Gerrish. The colonel was cashiered, but the general, being distinguished for his popularity, his integrity and patriotism, served as third in command at the termination of the American revolution.

The Battle of Bunker Hill, by Maj. Gen. Henry Dearborn, (1818.)

On the 16th of June, 1775, it was determined that a fortified post should be established at or near Bunker Hill.

A detachment of the army was ordered to advance early

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in the evening of that day, and commence the erection of a strong work on the heights in the rear of Charlestown.

The work was commenced and carried on under the direction of such engineers as we were able to procure at that time. It was a square redoubt, the curtains of which were about sixty or seventy feet in extent, with an intrenchment, or breast-work, extending fifty or sixty feet from the northern angle, towards Mystic river.

In the course of the night the ramparts had been raised to the height of six or seven feet, with a small ditch at their base, but it was yet in a rude and imperfect state. Being in full view from the northern heights of Boston, it was discovered by the enemy, as soon as the daylight appeared, and a determination was immediately formed by Gen. Gage, for dislodging our troops from this new and alarming position. Arrangements were promptly made for effecting this important object. The movements of the British troops indicating an attack, were soon discovered, in consequence of which, orders were immediately issued for the march of a considerable part of our army to reinforce the detachment at the redoubts on Breed's Hill.

Col. Stark's regiment was quartered in Medford, distant about four miles from the point of anticipated attack. It then consisted of thirteen companies, and was probably the largest regiment in the army. About ten o'clock in the morning he received orders to march. The regiment being destitute of ammunition, it formed in front of a house occupied as an arsenal, where each man received a *gill cup* full of powder, fifteen balls, and one flint.

After completing the necessary preparations for action, the regiment formed and marched about one o'clock. When it reached Charlestown Neck we found two regiments, halted, in consequence of a heavy enfilading fire thrown across it, of round, bar, and chain shot, from the Lively frigate, and floating batteries anchored in Charles river, and a floating battery lying in the river Mystic. Maj. M'Clary went forward, and observed to the commanders, if they did not intend to move on, he wished them to open and let our regiment pass; the latter was immediately done. My company being in front, I marched by the side of Col. Stark, who

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moving with a very deliberate pace, I suggested the propriety of quickening the march of the regiment, that it might sooner be relieved from the galling cross fire of the enemy. With a look peculiar to himself, he fixed his eyes upon me, and observed with great composure—"Dearborn, one fresh man in action, is worth ten fatigued ones," and continued to advance in the same cool and collected manner. When we had reached the top of Bunker Hill, where Gen. Putnam had taken his station, the regiment halted for a few moments for the rear to come up.

Soon after, the enemy were discovered to have landed on the shore of Morton's point, in front of Breed's Hill, under cover of a tremendous fire of shot and shells from a battery on Cop's Hill, in Boston, which had opened on the redoubt, at daybreak.

At this moment the veteran and gallant Starks, harangued his regiment in a short but animated address; then directed them to give three cheers, and make a rapid movement to the rail fence which ran from the left, and about forty yards in the rear of the redoubt towards Mystic river.

Our regiment was formed in the rear of the rail fence, with one other small regiment from New Hampshire, under the command of Col. Reed; the fire commenced between the left wing of the British army, commanded by Gen. Howe, and the troops in the redoubt under Col. Prescott, while a column of the enemy was advancing on our left, on the shore of Mystic river, with an evident intention of turning our left wing, and that veteran and most excellent regiment of Welsh fusileers, so distinguished for its gallant conduct in the battle of Minden, advanced in column directly on the rail fence, when within eighty or a hundred yards, displayed into line, with the precision and firmness of troops on parade, and opened a brisk but regular fire by platoons, which was returned by a well-directed, rapid, and fatal discharge from our whole line.

The action soon became general, and very heavy from right to left. In the course of ten or fifteen minutes, the enemy gave way at all points, and retreated in great disorder, leaving a large number of the dead and wounded on the field.

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The firing ceased for a short time, until the enemy again formed, advanced and recommenced a spirited fire from his whole line. Several attempts were again made to turn our left, but the troops having thrown up a slight stone wall on the bank of the river and lying down behind it, gave such a deadly fire, as cut down almost every man of the party opposed to them; while the fire from the redoubt and the *rail fence* was so well directed and so fatal, especially to the British officers, that the whole army was compelled a second time to retreat with precipitation and great confusion. At this time the ground occupied by the enemy was covered with his dead and wounded. Only a few small detached parties again advanced, which kept up a distant, ineffectual, scattering fire, until a strong reinforcement arrived from Boston, which advanced on the southern declivity of the hill, in the rear of Charlestown; it wheeled by platoons to the right and advanced directly upon the redoubt without firing a gun. By this time our ammunition was exhausted, a few only had a charge left.

The advancing column made an attempt to carry the redoubt by assault, but at the first onset every man that mounted the parapet was cut down, by the troops within, who had formed on the opposite side, not being prepared with bayonets to meet a charge.

The column wavered for a moment, but soon formed again; when a forward movement was made with such spirit and intrepidity as to render the feeble efforts of a handful of men, without the means of defence, unavailing, and they fled through an open space in the rear of the redoubt, which had been left for a gateway. At this moment the rear of the British column advanced round the angle of the redoubt, and threw in a galling flank fire upon our troops, as they rushed from it, which killed and wounded a greater number than had fallen before during the action. The whole of our line immediately gave way and retreated with rapidity and disorder towards Bunker Hill; carrying off as many of the wounded as possible, so that only thirty-six or seven fell into the hands of the enemy, among whom were Lieut. Col. Parker, and two or three other officers who fell in or near the redoubt.

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When the troops arrived at the summit of Bunker Hill, we found Gen. Putnam with nearly as many men as had been engaged in the battle; notwithstanding which no measure had been taken for reinforcing us, nor was there a shot fired to cover our retreat, or any movement made to check the advance of the enemy to this height, but on the contrary, Gen. Putnam rode off, with a number of *spades and pick-axes in his hands*, and the troops that had remained with him *inactive* during the whole of the action, although within a few hundred yards of the battle ground, and no obstacle to impede their movement but musket balls.

The whole of our troops now descended the northwestern declivity of Bunker Hill, and recrossed the neck. Those of the New Hampshire line retired towards Winter Hill, and the others on to Prospect Hill.

Some slight works were thrown up in the course of the evening—strong advance pickets were posted on the roads leading to Charlestown, and the troops anticipating an attack, rested on their arms.

Soon after the commencement of the action, a detachment from the British force in Boston was landed in Charlestown, and within a few moments the whole town appeared in a blaze. A dense column rose to a great height, and there being a gentle breeze from the southwest, it hung like a thunder cloud over the contending armies. A very few houses escaped the dreadful conflagration of this devoted town.

From similar mistakes, the fixed ammunition furnished for the field-pieces was calculated for guns of a larger calibre, which prevented the use of field-artillery, on both sides. From the ships of war and a large battery on Cop's Hill, a heavy cannonade was kept up upon our line and redoubt, from the commencement to the close of the action and during the retreat; but with little effect, except killing the brave Maj. Andrew M'Clary of Col. Stark's regiment, soon after we retreated from Bunker Hill. He was among the first officers of the army—possessing a sound judgment, of undaunted bravery, enterprising, ardent and zealous, both as a patriot and soldier. His loss was severely felt by his compatriots in arms, while his country was deprived of the

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services of one of her most promising and distinguished champions of liberty.

My position in the battle, more the result of accident than any regularity of formation, was on the right of the line at the rail fence, which afforded me a fair view of the whole scene of action.

Our men were intent on cutting down every officer they could distinguish in the British line. When any of them discovered one, he would instantly exclaim, "*there*," "*see that officer*," "*let us have a shot at him*," when two or three would fire at the same moment; and as our soldiers were excellent marksmen and rested their muskets over the fence, they were sure of their object. An officer was discovered to mount near the position of Gen. Howe, on the left of the British line, and ride towards our left; which a column was endeavoring to turn. This was the only officer on horseback during the day, and as he approached the rail fence, I heard a number of our men observe, "there," "there," "see that officer on horseback"—"let us fire," "no, not yet,"—"wait until he gets to that little knoll,"—"now"—when they fired and he instantly fell dead from his horse. It proved to be Maj. Pitcairn, a distinguished officer. The fire of the enemy was so badly directed, I should presume that forty-nine balls out of fifty passed from one to six feet over our heads, for I noticed an apple-tree, some paces in the rear, which had scarcely a ball in it from the trunk and ground as high as a man's head, while the trunk and branches above were literally cut to pieces.

I commanded a full company in action and had only one man killed and five wounded, which was a full average of the loss we sustained, excepting those who fell while sallying from the redoubt, when it was stormed by the British column.

Our total loss in killed was eighty-eight, and as well as I can recollect, upwards of two hundred wounded. Our platoon officers carried fusees.

In the course of the action, after firing away what ammunition I had, I walked to the higher ground to the right, in rear of the redoubt, with an expectation of procuring from some of the dead or wounded men who lay there, a supply.

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While in that situation, I saw at some distance a dead man lying near a small locust tree. As he appeared to be much better dressed than our men generally were, I asked a man who was passing me, if he knew who it was. He replied, "It is Dr. Warren."*

I did not personally know Dr. Warren, but was acquainted with his public character. He had been recently appointed a general in our service, but had not taken command. He was president of the provincial congress then sitting at Watertown, and having heard that there would probably be an action, had come to share in whatever might happen, in the character of a volunteer. His death was a severe misfortune to his friends and country. Posterity will appreciate his worth and do honor to his memory. He is immortalized as a patriot, who gloriously fell in defence of freedom.

The number of our troops in action, as near as I was able to ascertain, did not exceed fifteen hundred. The force of the British, at the commencement of the action, was estimated at about the same number, but they were frequently reinforced.

Had our ammunition held out, or had we been supplied with only fifteen or twenty rounds, I have no doubt that we should have killed and wounded the greatest part of their army, and compelled the remainder to have laid down their arms; for it was with the greatest difficulty that they were brought up the last time.

Our fire was so deadly, particularly to the officers, that it would have been impossible to have resisted it, but for a short time longer.

I did not see a man quit his post during the action, and do not believe a single soldier, who was brought into the field, fled, until the whole army was obliged to retreat, for want of powder and ball.

Every platoon officer was engaged in discharging his own musket, and left his men to fire as they pleased, but never

* This shows that no British officer was near Gen. Warren when he fell, and consequently that Col. Small's statement to Col. Trumbull is not true. I have said in the introduction to this work, that "it is most probable that Warren fell within the redoubt;" but the above statement of Gen. Dearborn, and the testimony of Samuel Lawrence, render it certain that he was shot in the retreat after leaving the redoubt.

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without a sure aim at some particular object, which was more destructive than any mode which could have been adopted with troops who were not inured to discipline, and never had been in battle, but were still familiar with the use of arms, from boyhood, and each having his peculiar manner of loading and firing, which had been practised upon for years, with the same gun; any attempt to control them by uniformity and system, would have rendered their fires infinitely less fatal to the enemy. Not an officer or soldier of the continental troops engaged was in uniform, but were in the plain and ordinary dress of citizens; nor was there an officer on horseback.

The total loss of the British was about twelve hundred; upwards of five hundred killed and between six and seven hundred wounded. The Welsh fusileers suffered most severely; they came into action five hundred strong, and all were killed or wounded but eighty-three.

I will mention an extraordinary circumstance to show how far the temporary reputation of a man may affect the minds of all classes of society.

Gen. Putnam had entered our army at the commencement of the revolutionary war, with such a universal popularity as can scarcely NOW be conceived, even by those who THEN felt the whole force of it, and no one can at this time offer any satisfactory reasons why he was held in such high estimation.

In the battle of Bunker Hill he took post *on the declivity towards Charlestown Neck;* where I saw him on horseback as we passed on to Breed's Hill, with Col. Gerrish by his side. I heard the gallant Col. Prescott (who commanded in the redoubt) observe after the war, at the table of his excellency, James Bowdoin, then governor of this commonwealth, "that he sent three messengers during the battle to Gen. Putnam, requesting him to come forward and take the command, there being no general officer present, and the relative rank of the colonel not having been settled; but that he received no answer, and his whole conduct was such, both during the action and the retreat, that he ought to have been shot." He remained at or near the top of Bunker Hill until the retreat, with Col. Gerrish by his side; I saw them

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together when we retreated. He not only continued at that distance himself during the whole of the action, but had a force with him nearly as large as that engaged. No reinforcement of men nor ammunition was sent to our assistance; and, instead of attempting to cover the retreat of those who had expended their last shot in the face of the enemy, he retreated in company with Col. Gerrish, and his whole force, without discharging a single musket; but what is still more astonishing, Col. Gerrish was arrested for *cowardice, tried, cashiered, and universally execrated;* while not a word was said against the conduct of Gen. Putnam, *whose extraordinary popularity* alone saved him, not only from trial, but even from censure. Col. Gerrish commanded a regiment, and should have been at its head. His regiment was not in action although ordered—but as he was in the suit of the general, and appeared to be in the situation of adjutant-general, why was he not directed by Putnam to join it, or the regiment sent into action under the senior officer present with it?

When Gen. *Putnam's* ephemeral and unaccountable popularity subsided or faded away, and the minds of the people were released from the shackles of a delusive trance, the circumstances relating to Bunker Hill were *viewed and talked* of in a *very different light*, and the selection of the unfortunate Col. *Gerrish* as a *scape-goat* considered as a *mysterious* and *inexplicable event*.

I have no private feeling to gratify by making this statement in relation to Gen. *Putnam*, as I never had any intercourse with him, and was only in the army where he was present, for a few months; but at this late period, I conceive it a duty to give a fair and impartial account of one of the most important battles during the war of independence, and all the circumstances connected with it, so far as I had the means of being correctly informed.

It is a duty I owe to posterity, and the character of those brave officers who bore a share in the hardships of the revolution.

Affidavit of Robert Bradford Wilkins.

I, Robert B. Wilkins, of Concord, county of Rockingnam, state of New Hampshire, do testify and say, that I acted as

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a private soldier in the battle of Breed's Hill, otherwise called the battle of Bunker Hill, on the 17th of June, 1775; that I was attached to Capt. Levi Spaulding's company, of Col. Jas. Reed's regiment. That I was on that day stationed at Charlestown, below the neck and on the main street, that our company proceeded from thence on to Bunker Hill, over the hollow and on to Breed's Hill; that after our company arrived at the works, near Mystic river, I was sent back on an errand, by the captain, to the house where we had been stationed; and on returning by a route nearer to the neck, than that we first passed, I saw Gen. Putnam with Col. Gerrish, as near as I could judge, one hundred rods from the line and troops I had left; that the firing with small-arms commenced after I returned the second time; that in the action the enemy were three times repulsed; that in the interval between the second and third repulse, I received a severe wound from a musket ball in my right elbow-joint, for which wound, I have since received a pension from the government of the United States; that I then left the field of battle just before the retreat of the Americans from the fort, and passed on to Bunker Hill, where I found Gen. Putnam and Col. Gerrish in nearly the same place where I first saw them; that I was then almost exhausted from the loss of blood; that Col. Gerrish gave me some refreshment and bound a handkerchief around my arm at the place of my wound, and sent two men to assist me over the neck, who left me before I had cleared the neck, and I fell and lay on the ground, until nearly all the Americans had retreated from the hill, when I was helped off. I served from the commencement to the close of the revolutionary war, and acted successively as a private, a sergeant, ensign and lieutenant.

ROBERT B. WILKINS.

Sworn to before Samuel Greene, Justice of the Peace. *May* 30, 1818.

Rev. Dr. William Bentley's statement.

SALEM, May 20, 1818.

I was with Gen. Stark on the 31st of May, 1810. I always had a deep interest in the man, and usually kept a

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notice of the subject of our conversation. I found him in great good humor, and soon upon his old war stories, which I did not take care minutely to preserve, because Maj. Caleb Stark had told me he was collecting every thing worthy of the public eye, and to be published after his father's decease, and in due honor of his memory. As among other objects, I intended to get a likeness, and was uncertain of success, among the maps, prints, and papers I carried him, were some portraits, and among them was one of Gen. Putnam. I recollect upon the sight of the head of Gen. Putnam he said, "My Champlain," as he called me, "you know my opinion of that man. Had he done his duty, he would have decided the fate of his country in the first action." He then proceeded to describe to me the scene of action and the "*pen*," as he called the enclosed works, and breast-works, and gave his reasons for not entering it, and the want of judgment in the works. He then told me where he saw Gen. Putnam and what was done on the occasion, and his remarks were as severe as his genius and the sentiments of ardent patriotism could make them. As Gen. Stark always used the same language on the subject, it will be recollected by many of his friends.

WILLIAM BENTLEY.

Certificate of the Rev. Daniel Chaplin, D. D., of Groton, and Rev. John Bullard of Pepperell.

This may certify the public, that we whose names we have given, were in the habits of intimacy with Col. W. Prescott, of Pepperell, a man of the strictest integrity, during most of the period after he left the revolutionary army until his death; that at sundry times in conversation with him about the war, particularly about the battle of Bunker Hill, so called, he uniformly told us, that Maj. Gen. Warren came to the fort on Breed's Hill, which had been formed the night preceding, a little before the British made an attack on the works; that he, Col. Prescott, said to Gen. Warren, "I am happy to see you, general," or using words to the same effect, "for you will now take command, and I will obey your orders and am relieved." Said Gen. Warren to him, in reply, "I have no command here, Col. Prescott, I

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am a volunteer, I came to learn actual service." Prescott said, "I wish then you would look at the works we have thrown up, and give your opinion." Warren replied—"You are better acquainted with military matters than I am." After which they immediately parted, and met not again. Col. Prescott further informed us repeatedly, that when a retreat was ordered and commenced, he was descending the hill, he met Gen. *Putnam*, and said to him, "Why did you not support me, general, with your men, as I had reason to expect, according to agreement?" Putnam answered, "I could not *drive* the dogs up." Prescott pointedly said to him, "If you could not *drive* them up, you might have *led* them up." We have good reason to believe further, from declarations of some of our parishioners, men of respectability, whose veracity cannot be doubted, who belonged to Col. Prescott's regiment, and were present through the whole service, that Gen. *Putnam* was not on Breed's Hill the night preceding, or on that day, except that just before the attack was made, he might have gone to the fort and ordered the tools to be carried off, that they might not fall into the hands of the enemy in the event of his carrying the works, and holding the ground, and that he and his men, with Col. Gerrish, remained on the side of Bunker Hill towards the neck during the whole action.

DANIEL CHAPLIN,
JOHN BULLARD.

Groton, June 5, 1818.

Statement of the Hon. Abel Parker, judge of probate.

As I was in the battle on Breed's Hill, otherwise called Bunker Hill, on the 17th day of June, 1775, and there received one ball through my leg, another having passed through my clothes, all accounts of that battle which I have seen published, have been to me extremely interesting. But I have never seen any account which I considered in any degree correct, until the one published by Gen. Dearborn. On perusing that account with the utmost attention, I could discover but one mistake, and that related to his assertion, 'that there was not a man that flinched,' or to that effect, for his narrative is not now before me, and even in that case, I believe the general's assertion may be strictly true, if his

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meaning be confined to the time after his arrival on the hill. Previous to that, there were many who left the ground at the fort, particularly at the landing of the British troops; but after the commencement of the battle with small-arms, I know of no man's leaving his post, until the order to retreat was given by Col. Prescott. But notwithstanding the correctness of Gen. Dearborn's description of that battle, some persons seem to be much exasperated by it, in particular as to what he asserted in regard to Gen. Putnam. As long as they confined themselves to mere declamation, without bringing forward any evidence to disprove the general's assertion, I deemed it unnecessary for me to appear in vindication of the general's statement. But on perusing a letter from Col. Trumbull to Col. *Putnam*, wherein mention is made of a conversation with Col. Small in London, I concluded, notwithstanding my aversion to taking any part in a newspaper discussion, that to remain any longer silent, would be absolutely criminal. I shall, therefore, in as concise a manner as possible, state what I know relating to that memorable battle. Immediately after the battle of Lexington, I engaged in the service of my country, in Capt. John Nutting's company, in the regiment commanded by Col. Wm. *Prescott*. Both of these officers belonged to the town of *Pepperell*, where I then lived. I was at this time a little more than twenty-two years of age. On the 16th day of June following, Col. *Prescott's* regiment with two or three others, were ordered to march and take possession of Bunker Hill. On our arrival at the place called Charlestown neck, a halt was made, and Capt. Nutting's company, with ten of the Connecticut troops, were detached to proceed into Charlestown as a guard; the remainder marched to the hill, which in fact was Breed's, and not Bunker Hill, where they commenced building a small fort. In the morning, not far from sunrising, the alarm was fired from the British vessel lying in the river. Some time after this, Nutting's company left the town, and marched to join the regiment on the hill. When we arrived there, the fort was in considerable forwardness, and the troops commenced throwing up the breast-work mentioned by Gen. Dearborn. We had not been long employed in that work, before the cannon shot from a hill in Boston, and the vessels

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lying in the river, were poured in upon us in great profusion. However, the work progressed until it would answer the purpose for which it was designed. But the firing from the British artillery continued with unabated fury. Some time before this, there was brought to the fort several brass field-pieces, one of which was actually fired towards Boston; but the ball did not reach the town. It had this effect, however, on the British, that it made them double their diligence in firing upon us. In the time of this heavy fire, I, for the first time that day, saw Gen. *Putnam* standing with others, under cover of the north wall of the fort, where, I believe, he remained until the British troops made their appearance in their boats. At this time the artillery was withdrawn from the fort, but by whose orders I know not, and Gen. *Putnam*, at, or near the same time, left the fort. The removing of the artillery, and *Gen. Putnam's* departure, took place a little before (if my memory be correct) the New Hampshire troops made their appearance on the hill. I saw them when they arrived, and witnessed their dexterity in throwing up their breast-work of rails and hay. When the British first made their attack with small-arms, I was at the breast-work, where I remained until I received my wound from the party who flanked it; I then went to the fort, where I remained until the order to retreat was given by Col. *Prescott*. After my arrival at the fort I had a perfect opportunity of viewing the operations of the day, and noticed Col. Prescott as the only person who took upon him any command. He frequently ordered the men from one side to the other, in order to defend that part which was prest hardest by the enemy; and I was within a few yards of him, when the order to retreat was given; and I affirm, that at that time *Gen. Putnam* was not in the fort, neither had he been there at any time after my entering the same; and I have no hesitation in declaring, that the story told by Col. Small to Col. Trumbull, concerning Gen. Putnam's saving him from the fire of our men at that time, is altogether unfounded.

ABEL PARKER.

Jeffrey, New Hampshire, May 27, 1818.

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GEN. MICHAEL MCCLARY'S LETTER.

"Epsom, May 10, 1818.

"DEAR SIR—

"Your letter of the first instant I received yesterday, and a few days previously, I saw in the New Hampshire Patriot the account published by your father of what is generally called Bunker Hill battle, which, to the best of my recollection, is correct.

"I was in the battle from its commencement to the end, and have no recollection of seeing Gen. Putnam in or near it. I was the principal part of the time the action continued near Col. Stark, who commanded the regiment to which I belonged, and on our retreat from Breed's Hill, in ascending Bunker Hill, I well remember seeing Gen. Putnam there on his horse, with a spade in his hand.

"Being an officer in the company under your father's command, I had an opportunity of knowing the circumstances generally attending the battle, and if Gen. Putnam had been there [that is, taken any part in it] I should have known it.

"I am, dear sir, &c.,

"MICHAEL MCCLARY.

"H. A. S. DEARBORN."

GEN. B. PIERCE'S LETTER.

"Hillsborough, N. H., May 17, 1818.

"MUCH RESPECTED GENERAL—

"I have read your account of the battle of Bunker Hill, and consider it to be more like *the thing itself* than any statement I have seen. I went on to the hill about 11 o'clock, A. M., on the 17th. When I arrived at the summit of Bunker Hill, I saw there two pieces of cannon, and two or three soldiers standing by them, who said they belonged to Capt. Callender's company, and that the officers had run away. Gen. Putnam sat there upon a horse. I saw nobody else but him and the before mentioned soldiers. The general *requested* our

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company (which was commanded by Capt. John Ford, of Chelmsford, Massachusetts) to take these cannon down to the lines; which they refused to do, saying they had no knowledge of the use of artillery, but were ready to fight with their own arms. Capt. Ford then addressed his company in a very animated strain, which had the desired effect, and they seized the ropes, and soon drew the cannon to the rail fence.

"I think I saw Gen. Putnam at that place, looking for something he had lost. I did not hear him give any orders, or assume any command, except at the top of Bunker Hill, when I was going to the field of action. I remained at the rail fence until all the powder and ball were spent. I had a full view of the movements of the enemy, and I think your statement of the order of the day, and of the two contending armies correct, and cannot be denied with the semblance of truth.—Excuse an old soldier.

"I am, sir, &c., B. PIERCE.

"Maj. Gen. HENRY DEARBORN."

According to the condition of Callender's artillery, as stated both by Gen. Dearborn and Col. Swett, it was excessively ridiculous for Gen. Putnam to request it to be taken to the lines, where it could be of no manner of use. Gen. Dearborn says: "From similar mistakes, the fixed ammunition furnished for the field-pieces was calculated for guns of a larger caliber, which prevented the use of field artillery on both sides." Col. Swett observes:

Perfect as was the fire of the American infantry, their artillery was as grossly defective in every respect. This arm requires science, experience, and knowledge of position. But the artillery companies were just selected from the infantry, and entirely ignorant of their duty. Callender carried his pieces into action, but his cartridges required adjusting. Totally in violation of military discipline, he left his post without orders, and was retiring to a secure place under cover of the hill, to prepare for firing. Putnam observed this ap-

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pearance of retreat, and was fired with indignation; he ordered him instantly to his post; Callender remonstrated, but Putnam threatened him with instant death, if he hesitated, and forced him back. His men, however, were disgusted with a part of the service they did not understand. Most of them had muskets and mingled in the fight. The pieces were entirely deserted, and the captain relinquished them.

Was it not possible to convince Gen. Putnam, that it is good policy in war to keep under cover, when preparing for action, instead of being uselessly exposed? I imagine there is some embellishment in this story, and that Putnam did not *threaten* Callender *with instant death, if he hesitated.*

With regard to Gen. Putnam's being seen, by Gen. Pierce, at the rail fence, it was evidently in the fore part of the day; and it is also evident, that he did not intend to stay longer than to find what he had lost. The battle did not commence till three o'clock, P. M. "At three o'clock," says Peabody, "the British line was formed, and the troops moved in perfect and imposing order towards the rail fence and redoubt." (p. 174.)

LETTER OF DR. THOMAS KITTRIDGE, OF ANDOVER.

"Boston, June 18, 1818.

"SIR—

"I received your letter of the 8th instant in due season, in which you request me to answer certain questions respecting the battle on Bunker Hill, so called.

"I was surgeon in Frye's regiment, and marched with the troops in the evening of the 16th of June, 1775, which consisted of three regiments, according to the best of my recollection, Frye's, Prescott's, and Bridge's.* Col. Prescott was considered commander

* According to Col. Swett, there were attached to this expedition, in addition to the above, one hundred and twenty men of Gen. Putnam's regiment, and one company of artillery, making in all about one thousand men.

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of the whole detachment. We arrived at the hill late in the evening, and the troops immediately commenced throwing up works for our defence. * * * * I left the hill with the first who was wounded, passed over Charlestown Neck, where I proceeded to dress his wounds. You ask whether I saw Gen. Putnam on that day, and where? I saw him only once, as I came off, at the foot of the lower hill, between where the battle was and Charlestown Neck. He was under a tree, with, as I supposed, about thirty or forty men. I made a halt, when I came against him, of three or four minutes; and while I was there, I heard Gen. Putnam request some of the men to go up to the fort, and endeavor to get some of the *intrenching tools*. I immediately left them, went over the neck, and there continued dressing the wounded until the engagement was over.

"I am, sir, &c.,

THOMAS KITTRIDGE.

"Gen. H. A. S. DEARBORN."

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CHAPTER V.

In order to a clear understanding of this matter, it is necessary to know the condition of the troops, in respect to organization. Mr. Peabody observes—"On the 21st of May, 1775, Gen. Ward was commissioned as major-general and commander-in-chief of the troops of Massachusetts; and his orders were obeyed by all the officers of other colonies within the province." Col. Prescott received orders from Gen. Ward to repair to Bunker Hill, with one thousand men, detached for the purpose, and erect a fortification. Prescott, however, finding Breed's Hill the most eligible position, erected the works there. He had, of course, command of the men detached for this service. After the action began, Prescott, from the nature of his situation, could not extend his command beyond the limits of his redoubt and breastwork. Other corps sent to his support, consequently, fought upon their own responsibility, under their respective officers. There was no general command; it being a hurried concern, there was little preconcert. As Gen. Putnam had no troops committed to his charge, he, of course, had no command. And here the mystery is explained, why no inquiry was instituted respecting his conduct, as there was of that of Col. Gerrish, who was ordered to the field of action. Putnam was not guilty of a disobedience of orders, having received none.

But, although not amenable to a military tribunal at the time, he was subject to trial at the bar of public opinion. He came to the camp with an exalted character as a patriot, and high military fame, in conse-

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quence of the very flattering accounts that had been given of his services in the *Seven Years' War;* which gave him unbounded influence with his compatriots in arms. And if, through these means, he caused the retention of the troops on Bunker Hill from the glorious conflict, his conduct can never be too severely censured. Of this the public must judge from the circumstances detailed. A decided opinion on the subject would, in all probability, have been formed before now, had not party strife mingled its baneful influence in the discussion.

Gen. Dearborn had given an apparently honest statement of such facts as came under his notice, at the battle of Bunker Hill, and which militated against the conduct of Gen. Putnam on that occasion; and Dearborn being afterwards nominated, by the republican party, for governor of the commonwealth of Massachusetts, the popularity of Putnam was brought, by the opposite party, to bear against his election. It was said he had traduced the character of this veteran soldier, and thus rendered himself unworthy of credit, and of course, unfit to be elevated to the high and responsible station of governor of the commonwealth, &c., &c.

Col. Daniel Putnam, before noticed, son of Gen. Putnam, published a counter statement to that of Gen. Dearborn, endeavoring to show that Gen. Putnam took an active part in the action; and the federal party appointed a committee to procure testimony to that effect. The late Samuel L. Knapp, Esq., was a member of that committee, and he stated to a friend of the writer, that notices were published inviting old soldiers in the country, who were in the battle of Bunker Hill, to come to Boston and give testimony of the facts required, and that they should be well remunerated for their expenses and time. Col. Knapp furthermore said, that he became disgusted with the manner in which this business was conducted, and resigned his place in the committee.

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On the principle, it is presumed, that "all's fair in politics," an article also appeared in the North American Review, said to be written by the honorable Daniel Webster, in which the testimony given in the case on both sides is stated, and the weight of evidence declared to preponderate in favor of the advocates of Putnam. If Mr. Webster wrote this article his argument should be received with great caution, for he must have felt as much interest in the decision of the question as he had in any action at law which he ever summed up in a court of justice. His given opinion, therefore, ought to have no more influence on the public mind than the pleadings of a lawyer for his client in a bad cause.

In addition to the foregoing, evidently to suit the occasion, a new

"HISTORICAL AND TOPOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF BUNKER HILL BATTLE" is manufactured by S. Swett, and industriously circulated.

I will take a brief view of this work. It may not be amiss to inform the reader, that the copy here used is added as an appendix to Humphreys' Life of Putnam, and that the pages of the latter, ending with page one hundred and sixty-nine, are continued in the appendix.

Col. Swett prefaces his volume thus:

"The writer of the following has no ambition or pretensions to be an author, but from his attention to military subjects, *consented to describe a battle*, one of the most glorious and important ever fought in America, and to render his feeble contribution to the monument of fame which history yet owes our ancestors. The materials lay scattered among *newspapers, magazines*, records and files of congress, the scattered surviving veterans of the day, and others. *He was compelled by circumstances to commence his researches in July, and finish his sketch in August.*"

By whose solicitation did the author *consent* to undertake this job? What call was there for it at this

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particular time, and especially, that so short a period should be allowed for its accomplishment? The election was near at hand, and it was deemed essential to persuade the people that Dearborn, in his description of the same battle, had falsified facts; and was consequently unworthy the confidence of his fellow-citizens; unsafe to be trusted with the power which his friends sought to bestow upon him.

Can any reliance be placed upon a history, induced by such motives, and thus hastily written; more especially, when composed of the materials here enumerated? No historian, surely, who had the least regard to the accuracy of his statements, would confide in *newspaper* reports. And, in this case, much of the testimony derived from *the surviving veterans of the day, and others*, when the manner in which it has been obtained is taken into consideration, is, perhaps, entitled to little more respect. But the history must be written, and the author was compelled to compose it of the documents with which he was furnished; and he certainly has shown a good deal of tact and management in the arrangement of them. His employers had reason to be satisfied with the performance.

The country has been inundated with newspaper, magazine, and oral traditions of the *prowess* and hair-breadth *escapes* of Israel Putnam, sufficient to form a small volume, exclusive of those recorded in his biography. From these Col. Swett has culled such of those respecting the battle of Bunker Hill as he thought best suited his purpose, with which he incorporated new reports, got up for the occasion.

In the author's preliminary remarks, page 185, he observes:

Connecticut, essentially and undeviatingly republican, was behind none of the provinces in her determined hostility to the usurpation and encroachments of the throne. To her antipathy to royalty the proscribed judges of Charles the First had owed their inviolable asylum in her territory. Re-

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ligious as well as civil liberty was in jeopardy, and the former with her was paramount to all earthly considerations. In her vocabulary, the *British troops were the Philistines, and Putnam, the American Samson, a chosen instrument to defeat the foe:* and fortunately she inspired her own confidence into all her sister states.

The most remarkable resemblance between the two characters, and which is probably alluded to here, is that each destroyed a ferocious wild beast, a lion and a wolf; but still there is a considerable disparity in the achievements. Samson "rent him [the lion] as he would have rent a kid, and *he had nothing in his hand.*" Whereas, Putnam shot the wolf with a musket, charged with *nine* buck-shot; which any common man might have done. It has been said, however, that "Putnam *strangled the wolf in his arms*, after having wounded her;" but this is admitted to be an error.

By the way, after the account of the wolf-killing had gone to press, I received from a gentleman, formerly a resident of Pomfret, further information on the subject; and as much has been made of this matter by the eulogists of Gen. Putnam, I will here insert an abstract of it. The person who gave me the former account, stated that he had never visited the cave in question, but received his information from others. After all, I think it doubtful that any person has entered this famous cleft to ascertain its dimensions, since the redoubtable exploit of Putnam; and I am inclined to believe that the account of my correspondent comes nearer the truth than any thing hitherto published on the subject. He says:

"The affair of the wolf is simple, but has been exaggerated. Some neighbors in Pomfret started a wolf, and he being closely pursued, found his way to a crevice of a large rock; the situation of which is solitary and romantic. He was soon dispatched by firing into the crevice; after which Putnam proposed getting him out, and his companions having fastened a rope to his

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heels he crept into the crevice and drew out the dead wolf, being assisted by his associates hauling the rope.

"This was the version of the wolf-story for many years; beyond this is bombast and exaggeration, intended to enhance the courage of Putnam."

If any danger were to be apprehended in the case, it was that the wolf might not be quite dead. Putnam, however, was well prepared for such event, having his musket well loaded,—which he doubtless discharged at the enemy before attempting to lay hands upon him, and then gave the signal for retreat. At his second or third entrance into the crevice, it seems, he secured his prey. The author continues:

The whole army was under the command of Artemas Ward, commissioned by the provincial congress, on the 21st of May, general and commander-in-chief of the Massachusetts forces. His general orders were copied and obeyed by the forces of all the other provinces in Massachusetts, indiscriminately, and the officers of all of them were ordered on courts martial, and detailed for the usual routine of duty without any distinction whatever. (Orderly Books.)

Gen. Ward was a gentleman of liberal education, vigorous understanding, and distinguished probity. He had been a member of the council, speaker of the assembly, and chief-justice of one of the courts in Massachusetts, and his rank and character commanded an extensive influence in the country. He had also served with reputation in the war of 1756, was a lieutenant-colonel at the storming [attempted] of Ticonderoga, under Gen. Abercrombie, and soon after commanded the regiment.

THE BATTLE.

On the 16th of June, 1775, with the advice of the council of war, Gen. Ward issued orders to Col. William Prescott, to the commander of Col. Frye's regiment, and Col. Bridge, to be prepared for an expedition, with all their men fit for service, and one day's provisions. The same order issued for one hundred and twenty of Gen. Putnam's regiment, and one company of artillery with two field-pieces.

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With these troops Col. Prescott was ordered to proceed to Charlestown in the evening, take possession of Bunker Hill, and erect the requisite fortifications to defend it. His orders were to be kept profoundly secret, and provisions and refreshments were to be sent in the morning, with as many more troops as should be necessary to reinforce him.

Not an officer in the army could have been selected more worthy the honor, or more adequate to the arduous undertaking than Col. Prescott. In this veteran, age already began to display its ravages; but the fire of his youth was undamped. He was of Pepperell, and was early left in affluence by the decease of his father. He soon received a commission in the provincial army, and, with many of his neighborhood who enlisted, he joined the forces under Gen. Winslow, and assisted in the conquest of Nova Scotia. His military talents attracted instant admiration, and he was urged by the British officers to accept a commission in the royal army. Attachment to his brave soldiers and countrymen, however, did not permit him to separate himself from them, and he returned to his estate. The soldiers who had served under him still considered him their head. Like the chief of some feudal clan, he received them all with open doors at his hospitable mansion. In the habits he had acquired in camps his property was expended for their relief, comfort, or entertainment, as freely as they were ready on every occasion to shed their blood for his honor, and under his command.

His figure was tall and commanding, and his countenance grave, ardent, and impressive as his character. With this presence, and his long and formidable sword, he needed no uniform to distinguish him as a leader. In a simple calico frock,* he headed the detachment of about one thousand men, who left camp at dark, and proceeded to Charlestown. Col. Prescott led the way with two sergeants, having dark lanterns, open only to the rear, about six paces in front of the troops.

Gen. Putnam, having the *general superintendence* of the expedition, and the chief engineer, Col. Gridley, accompanied the troops. Profound mystery hung over the object of

* It will be shown, in the sequel, that the description here given of the costume of Col. Prescott on this occasion is incorrect.—Edit. V. R.

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the expedition till they crossed Charlestown neck and found the wagons loaded with intrenching tools.

At daybreak Gen. Putnam ordered Lieut. Clark to send and request of Gen. Ward a horse for him to ride to Bunker Hill. The lieutenant went himself, but the general's *impatience* could not await an answer. On his return he found him mounted and departing.

The latter paragraph tends to discredit the former; because, if Putnam had gone on to the hill with the troops, as *general superintendent of the expedition*, it can hardly be conceived that he would have quit his post, and be found snug in Cambridge the next morning at daybreak.

The superintendence of a military expedition, by the way, must necessarily be confided to the commanding officer, otherwise a conflict of opinion might prevent the success of the enterprise. The probability is, that Gen. Putnam was not made privy to this expedition till after the troops detailed for the purpose had departed.

The author, in speaking of Warren's arrival at Bunker Hill, says:

He joined Gen. Putnam, and they consulted on measures to be pursued. Gen. Putnam informed him, that "from long experience he perfectly comprehended the character of the British army; *they would ultimately succeed and drive us from the works*, but from the mode of attack they had chosen, it was in our power to do them infinite mischief, though we must be prepared for a *brave* and *orderly retreat*, when we could maintain our ground no longer." Warren expressed his full assent to these opinions, and agreed to be governed by them.

Warren, on the contrary, according to all previous accounts of the battle, appeared to anticipate victory, and exerted all his energies to produce that result. Gen. Putnam unfortunately never seemed to have confidence in himself, nor in the troops he commanded, when contending with British forces.

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Mr. Peabody gives another version to the meeting of Warren and Putnam. There is no knowing which to believe, nor from whence they obtained their information. He says—"A single horseman rode at full speed over Bunker Hill, and encountered Gen. Putnam. It was Gen. Warren; and Putnam offered to receive his orders. Warren replied, that he came only as a volunteer, and desired to know where his services would be most useful. Putnam pointed to the redoubt, remarking that he would be covered there. 'I came not,' said Warren, 'for the purpose of security; tell me where the onset will be most severe.' 'Go, then, to the redoubt,' said Putnam; 'Prescott is there, and will do his duty; if that can be defended, the day is ours.' Warren rode forward to the redoubt, where he was received with loud acclamations."

Had Putnam followed the counsel himself, which he is here said to have given Warren, and gone to the redoubt with four or five hundred men of those uselessly retained upon Bunker Hill, the *redoubt* would unquestionably have been *defended, the day would have been ours*, and Putnam *justly* entitled to the applause of his country.

Putnam was anxious and mortified that a post, on which his defence and reputation so materially depended, should be entirely neglected. His mother wit, cultivated in the school of experience, under British officers, the most distinguished masters of the day, perfectly comprehended the immense importance of entrenching. He seemed to have intuitively seized the maxims of Cæsar's learned campaigns, as well as to anticipate the scientific results of such modern defences as Gen. Jackson's. He ordered *the entrenching tools* to be carried by a *large detachment* to the rear.

The first division of the enemy awaiting the remainder of the detachment, which had not yet embarked, were quietly dining, and most of them for the last time, from their crowded and cumbrous knapsacks.

Gen. Putnam seized the opportunity of hastening to Cambridge, whence he returned *with the reinforcements*. He had

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to pass a galling enfilading fire of *round, bar* and *chain shot*, which thundered across the neck from the Glasgow frigate in the channel of Charles river, and two floating batteries hauled close to the shore.

And now the brave Stark arrived with his regiment. Gen. Putnam reserved a part of it, to throw up a *work on Bunker Hill*, and ordered him to press on to the lines as quick as possible, with the remainder. They proceeded with the other New Hampshire regiment under Col. Reed, and joined the Connecticut troops at the rail fence.

Did Gen. Putnam expect to get back to the field of action before the enemy had finished dinner? He had no authority to order Col. Stark; but the latter may have been induced, at his request, to leave him a part of his regiment for the purpose specified.*

It will be remarked, however, that the entrenching tools had already been sent *to the rear by a large detachment*, consisting, it is supposed, of about two hundred men. And these were drawn from the redoubt, instead of ordering a party of the idle men on Bunker Hill to perform the service. This bad management, and retaining a part of Stark's regiment from the field of action, *to throw up a work on Bunker Hill without tools*, contributed essentially to decide the fate of the day.

The removal of the entrenching tools was avowedly to prevent their falling into the enemy's hands, in case of their carrying the fortifications, and, for that purpose, were of course conveyed across Charlestown neck. The men detached for the service were not again seen on the field of battle that day. Col. Swett admits this fact. He says—"The detachment sent off with the entrenching tools, in contempt of their orders, never returned." (p. 241.)

* Mr. Peabody gives the same account as Col. Swett, in respect to Putnam's detaining a portion of Stark's regiment on Bunker Hill. And Mr. Everett, in his Life of the latter, gives a like relation, upon the authority, it is presumed, of the two former writers; as no mention is made of it in the Memoirs of Stark, which he professes to follow as his guide, in regard to the personal history of the subject of his work.

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These tools were doubtless used, on the night succeeding the retreat, in throwing up breast-works on Winter and Prospect Hills.

The drums beat to arms. Putnam left his works, *commenced* on Bunker Hill, and led the troops into action.

Or, more properly, relinquished the *commencement of works*, having no means, as before shown, for the purpose. That Putnam, however, *led the troops into action*, is an allegation entirely gratuitous. The author produces no testimony in its support; besides, it has been positively proved not to be the fact.

Gen. Ward had by this time *despatched sufficient reinforcements*, but they did not reach the field. The fire across the neck wore an aspect too terrific for raw troops to venture in it. Putnam flew to the spot to overcome their fears and hurry them on before the enemy returned. He entreated, threatened, and encouraged them; lashing his horse with the flat of his sword, *he rode backward and forward across the neck, through the hottest fire, to convince them there was no danger*. The balls however threw up clouds of dust about him, and the soldiers were perfectly convinced that he was *invulnerable*, but not equally conscious of being so themselves.* Some of these troops, however, ventured over.

That Putnam passed Charlestown neck, in company with a reinforcement, that had been ordered to Bunker Hill, is not improbable; and that he rode ahead of the detachment is highly probable, presuming there would be less shot expended at a single object, than when a considerable body of men were exposed together. But that *he rode backward and forward across the neck*, as here represented, would prove him a madman, unfit to command armies. Putnam, throughout the whole of his military career, has shown too much common sense and *prudence*, thus uselessly to expose his person. The ridiculous experiment is also stated to have proved of

* The principal fact here is proved by the deposition of Mr. Samuel Bassett; the other circumstances by oral testimony.

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no avail, as it did not convince the troops there was no danger, but the contrary.

But after all the parade made with Gen. Putnam in respect to reinforcements, of what benefit was it, so long as they were not brought into action? "All the reinforcements," says Gen. Wilkinson, "which arrived at Bunker Hill, after Col. Stark had passed, halted and kept company with Gen. Putnam and Col. Gerrish."

Gen. Putnam left the neck for Bunker Hill to *bring up the reinforcements*. The men were disorganized and dispersed on the west side of the hill, and covered by the summit from the fire. Putnam ordered them on to the lines; he entreated and threatened them, and some of the most cowardly he *knocked down with his sword*, but all in vain. The men complained they had not their officers; he offered to lead them on himself, but "the cannon were deserted and they stood no chance without them." The battle indeed appeared here in all its horrors. The British musketry *fired high*, and took effect on this elevated hill, and it was completely exposed to the combined fire from their ships, batteries, and field-pieces.

What inconsistency! Gen. Putnam having just made a requisition on Col. Stark for men to assist in *raising his works* on Bunker Hill, is at the same time endeavoring to drive off others to the field of action at Breed's Hill. If these men declined fighting, surely they would not refuse to work, for their own security. "The men complained they had not their officers." This does not appear, however, to have been the fact; there was Col. Gerrish at the head of his regiment, by the side of Gen. Putnam, and it is not alleged that any of the officers left their corps. The story seems void of foundation, the sheer imagination of the writer. No one is found to vouch for it. The original biographer of Gen. Putnam, who claims to have derived his information immediately from the general, makes no mention of the circumstances here detailed. Col. Humphreys says: "In this battle, the *presence* and *example* of Gen. Putnam,

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who arrived with the reinforcement, were not less conspicuous than useful." But, according to the foregoing statement, the presence of Gen. Putnam was of no avail; in fact, it seemed like an *incubus*, paralyzing the energies of all around him. They followed *his example*, however, in keeping clear of the action.

All that Putnam could with propriety do, in the situation in which he stood, was, like Gen. Warren, to have rushed into the battle as a volunteer. He had no right to command a single soldier; but as the troops seem not to have been aware of this, it is surprising his influence should have had so little weight as represented, and it, therefore, remains in doubt whether he exercised or not any influence in the manner stated. No other officers complained of the disobedience of the soldiers; they had only to intimate their will, to have it immediately put in execution. Gen. Putnam alone required physical force, and that even seems to have proved unavailing, in producing obedience to his commands.

The advance of the enemy were in full view of the Americans. Putnam now, with the assistance of Capt. Ford's company, opened his artillery upon them. He had on this day performed the service of *general, engineer* and *guide*, and he now turned *cannonier*, with *splendid success*, and to the *highest satisfaction of his surrounding countrymen*. Each company of artillery had but twelve cartridges, and these were soon expended. He pointed the cannon himself, the balls took effect on the enemy, and one case of canister made a *lane through them*. As in Milton's battle,

"Foul dissipation followed and forced rout."

There seems to be some difficulty in giving Putnam his proper title upon this occasion. Col. Swett had before dubbed him general-superintendent, which, perhaps, comprehends all the above-mentioned titles. Passing his generalship, of which enough has been said, I must observe, that the route from Cambridge to Bunker Hill was probably too well known to require a *guide;* and

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as to *cannonier*, none was necessary, no use being made of the artillery. Gen. Dearborn observes—"The fixed ammunition, furnished for the field-pieces, was calculated for guns of a larger caliber, which prevented the use of field artillery." It was, perhaps, fortunate that the cannon balls provided were too large for the field-pieces, by which means, the powder, intended for the cannon, was reserved for the small-arms.

There can be no wonder, that the author, in giving this description, should have adverted to Milton's war in heaven, the poetry of the one corresponding with that of the other.

The Americans made every preparation possible to repel the last desperate effort of the enemy. Putnam again rode to the rear, and exhausted every art and effort to bring on the *scattered reinforcements*. Capt. Bayley, only, of Col. Gerrish's regiment, advanced to the lines, and Capt. Trevett now arrived at the rail fence with his pieces.

The Americans collected and made a brave and orderly retreat. Putnam put spurs to his *foaming horse and threw himself between the retreating force and the enemy*, who were but twelve rods from him;* his countrymen were in momentary expectation of seeing this *compeer* of the immortal Warren fall. He entreated them to rally and renew the fight, *to finish his works on Bunker Hill*, and *again give the enemy battle* on that unassailable position, and *pledged his honor to restore to them an easy victory*. Capt. Smith of Gen. Ward's regiment came with his company to reinforce, joined in the retreat, and assisted to keep the enemy at bay.

The Americans had retreated about twenty rods before the enemy had time to rally and pour in a destructive fire on them, which destroyed more than they had lost before during the day. Col. Prescott's adjutant was shot and crippled, Capt. Dow, of his regiment, was also crippled by a wound in the leg, and Capt. Bancroft had a part of his hand carried off.

* Deposition of Lyman, then a lieutenant, and present, and Miner, a private in the same company. This is confirmed too by the testimony of a distinguished officer of the revolution, yet living, who had served with Gen. Putnam in the French war, and was present himself and badly wounded.

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The American left wing were openly congratulating themselves on their victory, when their flank was opened by the retreat of the right. The enemy pressed on them, and they were in their turn compelled to retire. Putnam covered their retreat with his Connecticut troops, and *dared the utmost fury of the enemy, in the rear of the whole.* These pursued with little ardor, but poured in their thundering volleys, and *showers of balls fell like hail around the general.**

He addressed himself to every passion of the troops, to persuade them to rally, to *throw up his works on Bunker Hill,* and make a stand, and, as the last resort, threatened them with the eternal disgrace of deserting their general. He took his stand near a field-piece, and seemed resolved *to brave the foe alone.* His troops, however, felt it impossible to withstand the overwhelming force of the British bayonets; they left him. One sergeant only dared to stand by his general to the last; he was shot down, and *the enemy's bayonets were just upon the general, before he retired.*

A casual reader would be apt to think the bombastic description of Gen. Putnam's prowess here given was sheer burlesque, intended by the writer to throw ridicule upon his pretensions; but no such design was entertained. It is the common language used by authors generally when treating of Gen. Putnam, the *American Samson,* and, moreover, is perfectly in character with the subject thereof. I have the utmost confidence in the testimony here adduced; bating a few trifling mistakes which might easily occur. For instance, Putnam, with his Connecticut troops, did not cover the retreat. "No reinforcement of men, nor ammunition," says Gen. Dearborn, "were sent to our assistance; and, instead of attempting to cover the retreat of those who had expended their last shot in the face of the enemy, he [Putnam] retreated in company with Col. Gerrish and

* This fact we have from a respectable friend, who was present and yet lives, Philip Johnson, Esq., of Newburyport. His honor and veracity is surpassed by no man's. See also deposition of Capt. Hills, then ensign to Knowlton.

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his whole force, without discharging a single musket." This statement is confirmed by Col. Prescott.

The witnesses brought forward, in this case, were young men at the time, and seeing the fuming and blustering of the general, they would naturally look upon him as a paragon of heroism. But, it must be borne in mind, that this vain show was after the battle was lost; and to think then of raising a breastwork upon Bunker Hill, and that too without tools, and making a stand there, would have been sheer madness, an insult to the brave men who had survived the contest. This Putnam could have had no idea of attempting, whatever pretensions may be made to the contrary. For, according to Col. Swett's report of his declaration to Gen. Warren, he had no expectation of maintaining the position. And, besides, Mr. Swett admits, that *the entrenching tools had been sent off*. A few of these, it seems, remained scattered in different places, a part of which Gen. Putnam had collected and slung upon his horse, for the purpose of bearing them out of the reach of the enemy, and not with a view of erecting a fortification upon Bunker Hill. By his raving and dashing about, however, with his "*foaming horse*," he acquired what, from his former experience, he had reason to expect, the applause of the multitude. And he left the field a hero of the first order, "the bravest of the brave," and has continued to be so regarded to the present day.

Finally, if the foregoing inflated and extravagant relations respecting Gen. Putnam continue to obtain public confidence, there can be no limits to human credulity, and sober reason and common sense will in vain plead for consideration—they will be looked upon as flat and insipid in comparison with such exalted conceptions.

What seems mostly to be relied upon by Col. Swett, and to sustain which he advances his strongest testimony, is the swaggering, fighting attitude assumed by Putnam at the catastrophe, the closing scene of the

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drama. This, however, is not contradicted, but conceded in its fullest latitude, bating his remaining at *the cannon* till the enemy were close upon him.

AN ORATION

Was delivered at Charlestown, Massachusetts, on the 17th of June, 1841, in commemoration of the Battle of Bunker Hill, by George E. Ellis. Although the orator evidently wished to give an impartial history of this eventful scene, he appears to have labored under embarrassment in consequence of the political turn which had been given to the discussion, in respect to the part taken by individuals in the contest; and, by taking a middle course, he endeavors to escape the censure of either party which had entered into controversy on the subject. In doing this, his statements in some instances are in opposition to what, I believe, has been clearly proved in the foregoing pages. His reflections, however, are very interesting and valuable. He has ventured to give full credit to the real hero of that memorable day, Col. William Prescott, in opposition to all other claimants whatever. The following are extracts from the oration:

On the 15th of June, the Committee of Safety, by a secret vote, which was not recorded till the 19th, advised the taking possession of Bunker Hill and the Dorchester Heights. On the next day the provincial congress, as a counterblast to Gen. Gage's proclamation, by which Hancock and Adams had been excepted from the proffer of a general amnesty, issued a like instrument, in which Gen. Gage and Admiral Graves were the scape-goats.

It was amid the full splendor, luxuriance and heat of our summer, when rich crops were waving upon all the hills and valleys around us, that the council of war decided to carry into execution the vote of the Committee of Safety. We may omit the question as to the prudence or discretion of the measure, as being equally difficult of decision and unimportant, save as the misgivings of those who predicted

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that the deficiency of ammunition would endanger a failure, were proved by the result to be well grounded.

On Friday, June 16th, the very day upon which Washington was officially informed in the congress at Philadelphia, of his appointment to the command of the continental army about to be enlisted, Gen. Ward issued orders to Cols. Prescott and Bridge, and the commandant of Col. Frye's regiment, to have their men ready and prepared for immediate service. They were all yeomen from Middlesex and Essex counties, and were habituated to the hard labors of a farm beneath a summer's sun. Capt. Gridley's new company of artillery, and one hundred and twenty men from the Connecticut regiment, under the command of Capt. Knowlton, were included in the order.

Twenty-three years ago a controversy arose concerning the command of this expedition. Who was its commander, rightfully or actually? This question, which became most unfortunately mingled with party politics, was most earnestly and passionately discussed. The only decisive evidence which both parties would have admitted to be satisfactory, would consist in the production of the order which came from Gen. Ward; this, however, is not in existence. Judge-Advocate Tudor, who presided at the court martials instituted by Gen. Washington on his arrival at Cambridge, said that Col. Prescott appeared to have been the chief. The contradictory and discordant statements of those who, having been engaged in the field at different places and at different hours, were called upon during the controversy to make depositions as to who was the commander-in-chief, are to be accounted for by the lapse of time and the effects of age; and besides, great allowances are to be made on account of the confusion in the army, and the hurried and unsystematic character of the expedition. He who led the detachment and fulfilled the order, probably received the order. The order was to intrench, and to defend the intrenchments; this order was fulfilled by night and by day, by the body of men whom Prescott led from Cambridge to Charlestown, and by the reinforcements who joined them. There is no evidence that Prescott received any order from any other officer besides Gen. Ward. At any rate, he under-

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stood till the day of his death, that he had the command of the expedition. A fair and impartial detail of the action, if so be we are able to present it, will be sufficient to satisfy the simple desire for the simple truth.

Col. Gridley accompanied as chief engineer. Three companies of Bridge's regiment did not go, but as small parties of other regiments fell into the detachment, it consisted of about one thousand men. They took with them provisions for one meal. Col. Prescott was ordered to take possession of, to fortify and to defend Bunker Hill, but to keep the purpose of the expedition secret, nor was it known to the men until they found the wagons on Charlestown neck, laden with the intrenching tools. The detachment was drawn up upon Cambridge Common, in front of Gen. Ward's headquarters, after sunset, when prayers were offered by the Rev. Pres. Langdon, and about nine o'clock the expedition was in motion; Prescott, with two sergeants carrying dark-lanterns open in the rear, leading the way. Though Prescott has frequently been represented in accounts of the battle as dressed in the working garb of a farmer, and appears in Trumbull's painting as wearing a slouched hat and bearing a musket, he was in reality arrayed in a simple and appropriate military costume, a three-cornered hat, a blue coat with a single row of buttons, lapped up and faced; and he wore his well-proved sword. This statement may be thought a trivial correction, but it sometimes happens that important facts depend upon small particulars. As he was sensible to the effects of the heat, and expected warm service, he took with him a linen coat, or banyan, which he wore in the engagement.

The order designated Bunker Hill as the position to be taken. But by mounting it we can ourselves see that, commanded as it might be by shipping in the rivers, and by defences upon Breed's Hill, it would have been altogether untenable, except in connection with the latter summit, while for all purposes of restraining and annoying the enemy in Boston, Breed's Hill was far superior. Much time, however, was consumed in deliberation, after the detachment had crossed the neck, and it was only after the repeated and urgent warnings of the engineer that longer delay would nul-

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lify all their labors, that the works were commenced upon Breed's Hill about midnight. In the account of the engagement afterwards prepared by the Massachusetts congress, it is said that Breed's Hill was fortified by mistake. The reason for this statement is not apparent. Undoubtedly if both summits had been fortified, and defended by troops well provided with ammunition, the provincials would have maintained their ground, but they could not have prevented the design of the British in occupying the heights without securing Breed's Hill. As the summits are not within musket-shot, and as the British would certainly have occupied Breed's Hill, if not first taken by the provincials, our scanty ammunition and weak artillery would have been of but little avail. * * * * *

It has been asserted by two or three persons, and contradicted by others, who were together working by night upon the intrenchments, that Gen. Putnam was there, directing, encouraging, and aiding. As we have no certainty that he was then in the works, of course we cannot decide whether he had any part in their construction. He may have rode over the neck with or after the detachment, and he would have been a most welcome counsellor. As Putnam was met the next forenoon, coming from Cambridge to Charlestown, by Maj. Brooks, who was sent to Gen. Ward with a message from Col. Prescott, he must have left the redoubt, if he had been in it at all, in the course of the night, or very early in the morning. * * * *

The instant that the first beams of light marked distinctly the outlines of the Americans, and of their intrenchments upon the hill, the cannon of the Lively, which floated nearest, opened a hot fire upon them, at the same time arousing the sleepers in Boston to come forth as spectators or actors in the cruel tragedy. The other armed vessels, some floating batteries, and the battery on Cop's Hill, combined to pour forth their volleys, uttering a startling and dismal note of preparation for the day's conflict. But the works, though not completed, were in a state of such forwardness that the missiles of destruction fell harmless, and the intrenchers continued to strengthen their position. The enemy in Boston could scarcely credit their eyesight. Prescott, the hero

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of the day, with whom its proudest fame should rest, was undaunted, ardent, and full of heroic energy. He planned and directed, he encouraged the men, he mounted the works, and, with his bald head uncovered and his commanding frame, he was a noble personification of a patriot cause. Some of the men incautiously ventured from the works, when one of them was instantly killed by a cannon shot. This first victim was buried in the ditch, and his companions were fearfully warned of the fatalities which the day would bring yet nearer to them.

When the orders had been issued at Cambridge, the night before, to those who had thus complied with them, refreshments and reinforcements had been promised in the morning. Thus some of the men might have thought they had fulfilled their part of the work, and were entitled to relief, or were at liberty to depart. Some few, when the first victim fell, left the hill and did not return. Those who remained were exhausted with their toil, and without food or water, and the morning was already intensely hot. The officers, sympathizing with their situation and sufferings, requested Prescott to send to Cambridge for relief. He summoned a council of war, but was resolute against the petition, saying that the enemy would not venture an attack, and if they did venture, would be defeated; that the men who had raised the works were best able to defend them, and deserved the honor of the victory; that they had already learned to despise the fire of the enemy. The vehemence of Prescott infused new spirit into the men, and they resolved to stand the dread issue. Prescott ordered a guard to the ferry to prevent a landing there. He was seen by Gage, who was reconnoitering from Cop's Hill, and who inquired of Counsellor Willard, by his side, "Who is that officer commanding?" Willard recognised his brother-in-law, and named Col. Prescott. "Will he fight?" asked Gage. The answer was, "Yes, sir, depend upon it, to the last drop of blood in him; but I cannot answer for his men." Yet Prescott could answer for his men, and that amounted to the same thing. * * * *

By nine o'clock the preparations in Boston, heard and seen by Prescott on the hill, informed him of the determination of the British to attack. He therefore gave up his first opin-

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ion, that they would not dare to resist him, and comforted himself and his men with the promise of certain and glorious victory. He sent Maj. Brooks to Gen. Ward, to urge the necessity of his being reinforced. Brooks being obliged to proceed on foot, as Capt. Gridley would not risk one of his artillery horses to pass the neck, which was swept by the Glasgow frigate, arrived about ten o'clock at head-quarters, where the Committee of Safety were then in session. Brooks' urgency, seconded by the solicitations of Richard Devens, a member of the committee, and a citizen of Charlestown, induced Gen. Ward to order that Cols. Reed and Stark, then at Medford, should reinforce Prescott with the New Hampshire troops. The companies at Chelsea were then recalled, and the order reached Medford at eleven o'clock. The men were as speedily as possible provided with ammunition, though much time was consumed in the preparation. Each man received two flints, a gill of powder, and fifteen balls. They were without cartridge-boxes, and used powder-horns and pouches, or their pockets, as substitutes, and in making up their cartridges they were obliged to beat and shape their balls according to the different calibre of their guns. * * * * * *

It was of vital necessity that every charge of powder and ball spent by the Americans should take effect. There were none for waste. The officers commanded their men to withhold their fire till the enemy were within eight rods, and when they could see the whites of their eyes, to aim at their waistbands, also to "aim at the handsome coats, and pick off the commanders." As the British left wing came within gun-shot the men in the redoubt could scarcely restrain their fire, and a few discharged their pieces. Prescott, indignant at this disobedience, vowed instant death to any one who should repeat it,* and promised, by the confidence which they reposed in him, to give the command at the proper moment. His lieutenant-colonel, Robinson, ran round the top of the works and knocked up the muskets. When the space between the assailants and the redoubt was narrowed to the appointed span, the word was spoken at the moment; the

* This declaration has been borrowed from Prescott and given to Putnam. Edit. V. R.

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deadly flashes burst forth, and the green grass was crimsoned with the life-blood of hundreds. The front rank was nearly obliterated, as were its successive substitutes, as the Americans were well protected and were deliberate in their aim. * * * * * *

The British officers were seen to goad on some of their reluctant men with their swords. It was for them now to receive the fire, and to reserve their own till they could follow it by a thrust of the bayonet. Each shot of the provincials was true to its aim. Col. Abercrombie, Majs. Williams and Spendlove fell. Gen. Howe was wounded in the foot. Hand to hand and face to face, were exchanged the last awful hostilities of that day. Only a ridge of earth divided the grappling combatants, whose feet were slipping upon the gory sand while they joined in the mortal strife. When the enemy found themselves received with stones, the missiles of a more ancient warfare, they knew that their work was nearly done, as they now contended with unarmed men. Young Richardson, of the Royal Irish, was the first who scaled the parapet, and he fell, as did likewise the first rank that mounted it, among whom Maj. Pitcairn, who had shed the first blood at Lexington, was shot by a negro soldier. It was only when the redoubt was crowded with the enemy and the defenders in one promiscuous throng, and assailants on all sides were pouring into it, that Prescott, no less, but even more a hero when he uttered the reluctant word, ordered a retreat. A longer trial would have been folly, not courage. Some of the men had splintered their musket-stocks in fierce blows, nearly all were defenceless, yet there was that left within them, in a dauntless soul, which might still help their country at its need. Prescott gave the crowning proof of his devoted and magnanimous spirit, when he cooled the heat of his own brain, and bore the bitter pang in his own heart, by commanding an orderly and still resisting retreat. He was the hero of that blood-dyed summit—the midnight leader and guard, the morning sentinel, the orator of the opening strife, the cool and deliberate overseer of the whole struggle, the well-skilled marksman of the exact distance at which a shot was certain death; he was the venerable chief in whose bright eye and steady

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nerve all read their duty; and when conduct, skill, and courage could do no more, he was the merciful deliverer of the remnant. Prescott was the hero of the day, and wherever its tale is told, let him be its chieftain.

The troops in the redoubt now fought their pathway through the encircling enemy, turning their faces towards the foe while they retreated with backward steps. Gridley, who had planned and defended the works, received a wound, and was borne off. Warren was among the last to leave the redoubt, and at a short distance from it, a musket-ball through his head killed him instantly. When the corpse of that illustrious patriot *was recognised and identified the next morning* by Dr. Jeffries, Gen. Howe thought that this one victim well repaid the loss of numbers of his mercenaries. It is not strange that, both in English and American narratives of that day, and in some subsequent notices of it, Warren should have been represented as the commander of the provincial forces. His influence and his patriotism were equally well known to friend and foe. There is no more delicate task than to divide among many heroes the honors of a battle-field, and the rewards of devoted service. Yet the high-minded will always appreciate the integrity of the motive which seeks to distinguish between the places and the modes of service, where those who alike love their country enjoy the opportunity of securing the laurels of heroism and devotion. The council-chamber and the forum, and the high place in the public assembly, offer to the patriot-statesman the opportunity for winning remembrance and honor to his name; the battle-field must retain the same high privilege for the patriot-soldier, for there alone can he earn the wreath. Let the chivalry and the magnanimity of Warren for ever fill a brilliant page in our history, but let not a partial homage attach to him the honor to which another has a rightful claim. It was no part of his pure purpose, in mingling with his brethren on that field, to monopolize its honors and to figure as its hero. It is enough that he stood among equals in devotion and patriotism. Let it be remembered that he did not approve the measure of thus challenging a superior enemy with such insufficient preparation: the more honorable, therefore, was his self-

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sacrifice, in giving the whole energy of his will to falsify the misgivings of his judgment. Here, then, is his claim, which, when fully allowed, leaves the honors of that summit to the leader of the heroic band. * * * * *

Prescott repaired to head-quarters to make return of his trust. He was indignant at the loss of the battle, and implored Gen. Ward to commit to him three fresh regiments, promising with them to win back the day. But he had already honorably accomplished all that his country might demand. He complained bitterly that the reinforcements, which might have given to his triumph the completeness that was needed to make it a victory, had failed him.

I will close the subject of the Bunker Hill battle with the following notice, which lately appeared in the New York Commercial Advertiser. It may not be generally known, that Mr. Bancroft is now publishing a History of the United States, from the discovery of the American continent, which is spoken of with the highest approbation. He has come to the same conclusion as has been expressed in the foregoing sheets, in respect to the cause of Putnam's escaping the sentence of a court martial.

Although Gen. Putnam brought to the battle ground no reinforcements, a sufficient number were sent by Gen. Ward, the greater part of which stopped with the former and Col. Gerrish on Bunker Hill. These were supposed to amount to about one thousand two hundred, and to be equal to the number of Americans engaged in the action. Their retention, it is evident, caused the loss of the battle; and Mr. Bancroft has doubtless so expressed himself in his lecture.

"Mr. Bancroft has been delivering a lecture in Boston, the subject of which was the battle of Bunker Hill. It is spoken of as one of the author's ablest and most brilliant performances. Upon one point, that of the questioned presence and merits of Gen. Putnam in that battle, Mr. Bancroft had taken great pains in his preparation. The result of his researches has been to settle

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the point. The commander was Col. Prescott—*not* Gen. Putnam. Nor did the latter take any efficient part in the engagement. Before it commenced he went to the rear to bring up reinforcements. Putnam reappeared before the battle was over, but without the reinforcements. The loss of the day was attributed to their absence. An inquiry upon the subject was instituted by Washington, and the reason that Putnam escaped censure was the fact that he was not in *any* command during the day."

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CHAPTER VI.

BATTLE OF LONG ISLAND.

After the battle of Bunker Hill, the next conspicuous and responsible situation in which Gen. Putnam appears, was at the battle of Long Island.

Col. Humphreys gives but a slight sketch of this event, of which the following is the most essential:

On the 22d day of August, [1776,] the van of the British landed on Long Island, and was soon followed by the whole army, except one brigade of Hessians, a small body of British, and some convalescents, left on Staten Island. Our troops on Long Island had been commanded during the summer by Gen. Greene, who was now sick; and Gen. Putnam took the command *but two days* [four days] before the battle of Flatbush. The instructions to him, pointing in the first place to decisive expedients for suppressing the scattering, unmeaning, and wasteful fire of our men, contained regulations for the service of the guards, the brigadiers and the field-officers of the day; for the appointment and encouragement of proper scouts, as well as for keeping the men constantly at their posts. To these regulations were added exhortations for the soldiers to conduct themselves manfully in such a cause, and *for their commander to oppose the enemy's approach with detachments of his best troops;* while he should endeavor to render their advance more difficult by constructing abattis, and *to entrap their parties by forming ambuscades.* Gen. Putnam was within the lines, when an engagement took place on the 27th, between the British army and our advanced corps, in which we lost about a thousand men in killed and missing, with the generals Sullivan and Lord Stirling made prisoners. But our men, though attacked on

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all sides, fought with great bravery; and the enemy's loss was not light.

The unfortunate battle of Long Island, the masterly retreat from thence, and the actual passage of part of the hostile fleet in the East river, above the town, preceded the evacuation of New York.

To the foregoing I add the account of that affair by Judge Marshall, in his Life of Gen. Washington; which has the most undoubted claims to authenticity, being "compiled under the inspection of the Hon. Bushrod Washington, from original papers, bequeathed to him by his deceased relative, and now [at the time of his writing] in possession of the author."

I shall notice only such leading points as go to show the cause of the terrible disasters of that day.

"As the defence of Long Island was intimately connected with that of New York, a brigade had very early been stationed there, and had taken a strong position at Brooklyn, capable of being maintained for a considerable time. This post, communicating immediately with York island, might easily be reinforced, or abandoned, as occasion should require, and there an extensive camp had been marked out and fortified. * * *

"Maj. Gen. Greene originally commanded on Long Island, but he being unfortunately taken extremely ill, was superseded by Gen. Sullivan. * * * The movements of the enemy soon indicated an intention to make their first attack on Long Island, in consequence of which Gen. Sullivan was strongly reinforced. Early in the morning of the 22d the principal part of the British troops, and Col. Donlop's corps of chasseurs and Hessian grenadiers, with forty pieces of cannon, landed without opposition, under cover of the guns of the fleet, near Utrecht and Gravesend.

"Maj. Gen. Putnam was now directed *to take command at Brooklyn*, which camp was reinforced with six regiments; and *he was charged most earnestly* by the commander-in-chief to be in constant readiness for

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an attack, and *to guard the woods between the two camps with his best troops.*

"In front of the camp was a range of hills covered with thick woods, which extended from east to west nearly the length of the island, and across which were three roads leading to Brooklyn ferry. These hills, though steep, are everywhere passable by infantry.

"About nine o'clock at night, Gen. Clinton silently drew off the van of the army, consisting of the light infantry, grenadiers, light-horse, reserve under Lord Cornwallis, and some other corps, with fourteen field-pieces, from Flatland, across the country, through that part which is called the New Lotts, in order to seize a pass in the heights about three miles east of Bedford, on the Jamaica road. Arriving entirely undiscovered, about two hours before daybreak, within half a mile of the pass, he halted to make his dispositions for taking possession of it. Here his patrols fell in with and captured one of the American parties, which had been stationed on this road for the purpose of giving notice of the first approach of the enemy in that quarter. Learning from his prisoners that *the pass was unoccupied*, he immediately seized it; and on the appearance of day, the whole column passed the heights and advanced into the level country between them and Brooklyn. They were immediately followed by another column under Lord Percy." (Gen. Howe's letter.)

"About three o'clock in the morning, Brig. Gen. Lord Stirling was directed, with the two nearest regiments, to meet the enemy on the road leading from the Narrows. Maj. Gen. Sullivan, who commanded all the troops without the lines, proceeded with a very considerable body of New Englanders on the road leading directly to Flatbush, and another detachment occupied the heights between that place and Bedford. * * *

"The firing towards Brooklyn gave the first intimation to the American right, that the enemy had gained their rear. * * * * * *

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"The loss sustained by the American army was very considerable, but could not be accurately ascertained by either party. Gen. Washington did not admit it to exceed one thousand men, but in this estimate he could only have included the regular troops. In a letter written by Gen. Howe, he states the prisoners to have amounted to one thousand and ninety-seven, among whom were Maj. Gen. Sullivan, Brig. Lord Stirling, and Woodhull. He computes the loss of the Americans at three thousand three hundred, but this computation is probably excessive. The loss of the enemy is stated by Gen. Howe at twenty-one officers, and three hundred and forty-six privates killed, wounded, and taken.

"The attempt to defend Long Island was so disastrous in its issue, and believed to have been so perilous in itself, that persons were not wanting who condemned it; and it is yet represented as a great error in the commander-in-chief. But in deciding on the wisdom of measures, the event will not always lead to a correct judgment. Before a just opinion can be formed, it is necessary to consider the previous state of things, to weigh the motives which led to the decision, and to compare the value of the object and the probability of securing it, with the hazards attending the attempt.

"There was, certainly, in the plan of maintaining Long Island considerable hazard; but not so much as to demonstrate the propriety of relinquishing a post of so much importance, without a struggle to preserve it.

"With much more appearance of reason, the general has been condemned for not having guarded the road that leads over the hills from Jamaica to Bedford. An attention to this object was *more particularly the duty of the officer commanding the post, whose general written instructions, given two days previous to the action, had directed that the woods should be well guarded, and the approach of the enemy through them rendered as difficult as possible.*

"The most advisable plan appears to have been, so

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to watch the motions of the enemy, as, if possible, to be master of his designs, to oppose with a competent force every attempt to seize the heights, and to guard all the passes in such a manner as to receive notice of the approach through any one of them in sufficient time to recall the troops maintaining the others.

"This plan was adopted; and the heavy disasters of the day are principally attributable to the failure of those charged with the execution of that very important part of it, respecting the intelligence from the Jamaica road."

It thus appears that Gen. Putnam did not fulfil the orders of the commander-in-chief, in guarding the passes in question. He had a large disposable force under his command, amply sufficient for the purpose, which remained idle with him at Brooklyn Heights during the struggle. "Gen. Clinton," says Gen. Howe, "learning from his prisoners that *the pass was unoccupied*, immediately seized it." These prisoners consisted probably of some half-dozen men; whereas, one hundred or a hundred and fifty were required at that pass, to be of any avail. Such number would likely have been able to capture the British patrols, and give immediate information at head-quarters of the approach of the enemy in that quarter.

"The suspicions of Gen. Putnam," says Marshall, "had been very much directed towards the road along the coast." And his erroneous judgment, it seems, led to his disobedience of orders. Hence the fatal calamity of that eventful day, in which the Americans had over three thousand men killed, wounded, and taken prisoners. Although the American army might not have been able to retain its position on Long Island, still its loss would have been far less, had Putnam done his duty. There is no possibility of evading this conclusion. By his remissness, the enemy passed undiscovered within our lines, by which means the American army was completely surrounded, and had to fight their way

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through the ranks of the enemy as well as they could; many of whom in the attempt were killed, wounded, or taken prisoners.

By the assigning of Putnam to the command at Brooklyn, it would not appear that he was to supersede Gen. Sullivan. Marshall, moreover, says—"Maj. Gen. Sullivan commanded all the troops without the lines." Sullivan, however, entertained a different opinion, as will presently be shown. It was proper for Gen. Washington to remain in New York, for he could not know that the descent upon Long Island was not a mere finesse, and that the main attack would be on the city of New York. It consequently became important that some head-quarters should be established on Long Island, and Brooklyn was the only convenient station for the purpose. Here, moreover, was the grand depot of troops, and the officer commanding had the power to detach such portions of them as he chose, to give aid wherever required, and, therefore, had virtually the chief command. This was the most responsible station, and the commandant ought to have had a sufficient number of mounted men constantly on the alert, to give him information from the different positions on the lines, every ten or fifteen minutes. Nothing of the kind was done, all was left hap-hazard. No intelligence of the enemy was received till they were within our lines, and the American army was surprised and overwhelmed in consequence of this criminal neglect.

That Gen. Putnam considered himself in command of all the troops on Long Island is evident from the statement of the vigilant, enterprising officer, Col. [then major] Aaron Burr, as made to his biographer, and by him published as follows:

"At this time Maj. Gen. Greene commanded on Long Island, but his health was so bad, that it became necessary for him to resign it. The commander-in-chief ordered Gen. Putnam to assume the command. Maj. Burr was his aid-de-camp. The landing of the British

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had been previously effected, on the 22d of August, without opposition, near Utrecht and Gravesend, on the southwest end of the island. The American troops, less than twelve thousand, were encamped on the north of Brooklyn Heights. The British force was more than twenty thousand strong. The armies were separated by a range of hills, at that time covered with wood, called the Heights of Gowannus. Maj. Burr immediately commenced an inspection of the troops, and made to the general a most unfavorable report, both as to the means of defence and their discipline. Previous to the action, Maj. Burr had expressed to Gen. Putnam the opinion, that a battle ought not to be risked. He proposed, however, several enterprises for beating up the quarters of the enemy. To all which Gen. Putnam replied, that his orders were not to make any attack, but to act on the defensive only." (Davis's Mem. A. Burr, vol. 1, p. 98.)

According to this order, the enemy were not to be disturbed till they were perfectly prepared for action; left quietly to choose their own time, and place of attack. There must be here some misconception on the part of Gen. Putnam. Under the circumstances in which the armies were placed, it would seem impossible that the commander-in-chief should have given such an order. The notorious Gen. Hull acted upon this principle: not Washington!

The following letter explains the views of Gen. Sullivan, in regard to the command at the action on Long Island:

Extract of a letter from Gen. Sullivan to the president of congress:

"Whitemarch, 26th of October, 1777.

"I know it has been generally reported, that I commanded on Long Island when the action happened there. This is by no means true. Gen. Putnam had taken the command from me *four days* before the ac-

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tion. Lord Stirling commanded the main body without the lines. I was to have commanded under Gen. Putnam within the lines. I was uneasy about a road, through which I had often foretold that the enemy would come, *but could not persuade others to be of my opinion.* I went to the hill near Flatbush to reconnoiter, and with a picket of four hundred men was surrounded by the enemy, *who had advanced by the very road I had foretold, and which I had paid horsemen fifty dollars for patrolling by night, while I had the command.*

"What resistance I made with these four hundred men against the British army, I leave to the officers who were with me to declare. Let it suffice for me to say, that the opposition of the small party lasted from half-past nine to twelve o'clock." (Sparks' Washington, vol. iv., p. 517.

Sullivan must have alluded to Gen. Putnam, as not being apprehensive of the enemy's taking the route by which they actually entered the American lines; for Washington had expressed his opinion fully that there should be a bright look-out in that quarter, and the passes well guarded. This delusion of Putnam, perhaps, caused his neglect of orders, which led to the fatal catastrophe that followed.

It appears that Gen. Sullivan conceived he had been slighted in respect to the command on Long Island, as well as on other occasions, and that he expressed his feelings to Washington on the subject, which drew from the latter the following singular letter:

Extract of a letter from Gen. Washington to Gen. Sullivan:

Morristown, 15th March, 1777.

"Do not, my dear Gen. Sullivan, torment yourself with imaginary slights, and involve others in the perplexities you feel on that score. No other officer of rank, in the whole army, has so often conceived him-

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self neglected, slighted, and ill-treated, as you have done, and none I am sure has had less cause than yourself to entertain such ideas. Mere accidents, things which have occurred in the common course of service, have been considered by you as designed affronts. But pray, sir, in what respect did Gen. Greene's late command at Fort Lee differ from his present command at Baskenridge, or from yours at Chatham? And what kind of separate command had Gen. Putnam at New York? I never heard of any, except his commanding there ten days before my arrival from Boston, and one day after I had left it for Harlem Heights, as senior officer. In like manner at Philadelphia, how did his command differ from the one he has at Princeton,* and wherein does either vary from yours at Chatham? Are there any peculiar emoluments or honors to be reaped in the one case and not in the other? No. Why then these unreasonable, these unjustifiable suspicions?

"Your ideas and mine, respecting separate commands, have but little analogy. I know of but one separate command, properly so called, and that is the northern department: and Gen. Sullivan, Gen. St. Clair, or any other general officer at Ticonderoga, will be considered in no other light, whilst there is a superior officer in the department, than if he were placed at Chatham, Baskenridge, or Princeton. But I have not time to dwell upon a subject of this kind." (Sparks' Washington, vol. iv. p. 364.)

* Putnam's command at Princeton will be taken notice of hereafter.

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CHAPTER VII.

CAPTURE OF FORTS MONTGOMERY AND CLINTON.

THE next prominent command of Gen. Putnam was a little below the Highlands on the North river; than which no military post in the country at the time was more important. Here obstructions had been thrown across the river, and forts erected to defend them, for the purpose of preventing the passage of the enemy's ships. This pass might with propriety be denominated the Thermopyle of New York. And although Gov. Clinton, who had charge of forts Montgomery and Clinton, and the citizen soldiers under his command, exhibited bravery equal perhaps to that of Leonidas and his Spartan band of heroes; but being attacked in rear, as was Leonidas, they were overpowered by superior numbers, while the main army at the post, instead of being stationed, a part of them at least, so as to guard the passes through the mountains agreeably to Washington's instructions, was drawn off by the commander-in-chief miles from the scene of action, out of reach of the enemy, where they remained idle during the engagement, without an opportunity of discharging a single shot.

Col. Humphreys gives the following account of the storming of the forts, and the consequent removal of the obstructions in the river:

On the 5th of October, [1777,] Sir Henry Clinton came up the North river with three thousand men. After making

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many feints to mislead the attention, he landed, the next morning, at Stony Point, and commenced his march over the mountains to Fort Montgomery. Gov. Clinton, an active, resolute, and intelligent officer, who commanded the garrison, upon being apprised of the movement, despatched a letter, by express, to Gen. Putnam for succor. By the *treachery* of the messenger, the letter miscarried. *Gen. Putnam, astonished at hearing nothing respecting the enemy, rode, with Gen. Parsons, and Col. Root, his adjutant-general, to reconnoiter them at King's Ferry.* In the mean time, at five o'clock in the afternoon, Sir Henry Clinton's columns, having surmounted the obstacles and barriers of nature, descended from the Thunder Hill, through thickets impassable but for light troops, and attacked the different redoubts. The garrison, inspired by the conduct of their leaders, defended the works with distinguished valor. But, as the post had been designed principally to prevent the passing of ships, and *as an assault in rear had not been expected*, the works on the land side were incomplete and untenable. In the dusk of twilight, the British entered with their bayonets fixed. Their loss was inconsiderable. Nor was that of the garrison great. Gov. Clinton, his brother Gen. James Clinton, Col. Dubois, and most of the officers and men, effected their escape under cover of the thick smoke and darkness that suddenly prevailed. The capture of this fort by Sir Henry Clinton, together with the consequent removal of the chains and booms that obstructed the navigation, opened a passage to Albany, and seemed to favor a junction of his force with that of Gen. Burgoyne. But the latter having been compelled to capitulate a few days after this event, and great numbers of militia having arrived from New England, *the successful army returned to New York;* yet not before a detachment from it, under the orders of Gen. Vaughan, had burnt the defenceless town of Esopus, and several scattering buildings on the banks of the river.

The author of these memoirs, then major of brigade to the first Connecticut brigade, was *alone* at head-quarters when the firing began. He hastened to Col. Wyllys, the senior officer in camp, and advised him to despatch all the men not on duty to Fort Montgomery, *without waiting for or-*

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ders. About five hundred men marched instantly under Col. Meigs; and the author, with Dr. Beardsley, a surgeon in the brigade, rode, at full speed, through a bye-path, to let the garrison know that a reinforcement was on its march. Notwithstanding all the haste these officers made to and over the river, the fort was so completely invested on their arrival, that it was impossible to enter. They went on board the new frigate which lay near the fortress, and had the misfortune to be idle, though not unconcerned spectators of the storm. They saw the minutest actions distinctly when the works were carried. The frigate, after receiving several platoons, slipped her cable, and proceeded a little way up the river; but the wind and tide becoming adverse, the crew set her on fire, to prevent her falling into the hands of the enemy, whose ships were approaching.

Without attributing treachery to the messenger of Gov. Clinton, of which there is no probability, Marshall accounts very naturally for his not meeting with Gen. Putnam—namely, in consequence of his absence from camp on a reconnoitering excursion. That "an assault in rear had not been expected," is in direct contradiction to fact. 'Gen. Washington "directed," says Marshall, "that two thousand militia should be called for from Connecticut to guard the passes through the mountains." According to the same author, it appears that the works were in good condition in the rear. In fact, an attack could be made from no other quarter, as will soon be shown. Men only were wanted. Had a third of the troops that were unoccupied been thrown into the forts, the force would have been sufficient to maintain them.

The following is an abstract of Judge Marshall's history of the transactions upon this occasion:

"On the arrival in September of a reinforcement of Europeans at New York, fears were immediately entertained for the Highlands; and Gen. Putnam, in conformity with his instructions, called for assistance on

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Connecticut and New York, the governor of which latter state was also the commanding officer in the forts. His requisitions were complied with, but the enemy not marching immediately against these posts, and the services of the militia being necessary at home to seed their farms, they became exceedingly impatient: many of them deserted, and Gen. Putnam *was induced to discharge the residue.*

"Impressed with the danger to which the forts were exposed *from this measure*, and entirely convinced, from the present state of both the British armies, that the attack must be made very soon, if at all, Gov. Clinton immediately ordered out half the militia of New York, with assurances that they should be relieved in one month by the other half. The order, to which a reluctant obedience was paid, was executed so slowly, that the forts were carried before the militia were in the field.

"This post had always been, in the opinion of the commander-in-chief, an object of the first importance; and, in no state of things, under no pretence of a superior army commanded by himself, had he ceased to view it with interest, and to be attentive to its safety. When therefore his orders were given to make detachments from thence, in order to repel incursions into Jersey, and to reinforce the army in Pennsylvania, so as to leave, according to the returns, less than three thousand men, including the militia; he, in the most explicit terms, stated his apprehension that the enemy would attempt something up the North river. Under this impression, he directed that two thousand militia should be immediately called for from Connecticut *to guard the passes through the mountains*, while the forts themselves should be sufficiently garrisoned with the best troops. Great pains had been taken, and much labor employed, to render this position, which is by nature very strong, still more secure. The defences most relied upon were forts Montgomery and Clinton, on the

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western bank of the Hudson, on very high ground, extremely difficult of access, and separated from each other by a small creek which runs from the mountains into the river. *These forts were too much elevated to be battered from the water*, and the hills on which they were erected, too steep to be ascended by troops landing at the foot of them; and the mountains, which commence five or six miles below them, are so very high and rugged, the defiles through which the roads leading to them pass, so narrow, and commanded in such a manner by the heights on both sides, that the approaches to them are extremely difficult and dangerous.

"To prevent the enemy from passing these forts, chevaux-de-frize were sunken in the river, and a boom extended from bank to bank. This boom was covered with immense chains stretched at some distance in its front, for the purpose of breaking the face of any vessel sailing against it. These works were not only defended by the guns of the fort, but by a frigate and galleys stationed above them, capable of opposing with an equal fire in front, any force which might attack by water from below.

"Fort Independence is four or five miles below forts Montgomery and Clinton, and on the opposite side of the river, on a high point of land; and Fort Constitution is about six and a quarter miles above them, on an island near the eastern shore.

"The garrisons at this time amounted to about six hundred men, and the whole force under Gen. Putnam, the militia having generally left him, did not much exceed two thousand. Yet this force, though so much less than that, which *an attention to the orders of Gen. Washington would have retained at the station, was, if properly applied, more than competent to the defence of the forts against any numbers which could be spared from New York.* * * * * * Somewhat more than three thousand men embarked at New York, and

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landed on the 5th day of October at Verplanck's point, on the east side of the Hudson, a short distance below Peekskill, and Gen. Putnam *retired to the heights in his rear.* On the evening of the same day a part of the troops re-embarked, and the fleet moved up the river. The next morning, at break of day, the troops destined for the enterprise, debarked on the west side at Stony point, and immediately commenced their march through the mountains into the rear of forts Montgomery and Clinton. The debarkation was not made unobserved; but the morning was so very foggy that the numbers could not be distinguished. In the mean time, the manœuvers of the vessels, and *the appearance of the small detachment left at Verplanck's point, persuaded Gen. Putnam that the meditated attack was on Fort Independence.*

"Gov. Clinton, who commanded in the forts, having notice about ten o'clock in the morning of the approach of the enemy, made the best disposition in his power, and sent out as strong parties as his situation would admit, for the purpose of harassing them in their march through the defiles of the mountains, many of which were already passed. He also sent an express to Gen. Putnam to give notice of the danger which threatened him. Of this express Putnam makes no mention; but as he states himself to have been returning with Gen. Parsons from reconnoitering the position of the enemy on the east side of the river, it is probable he might be engaged on that business when the express reached the camp.

* * * "The garrison, when summoned, having refused to surrender, the attack commenced about five, on both forts. The approaches to each had been rendered extremely difficult by redoubts, by artillery, and by rows of abattis extending for three or four hundred yards. The works were defended with resolution, and were maintained till dark, when, the lines being too extensive to be completely manned, the enemy entered them in

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different places; and the defence being no longer possible, part of the garrison were made prisoners, while their better knowledge of the country enabled others to escape. Gov. Clinton passed the river in a boat, after the enemy were in possession of the forts, and Gen. James Clinton, though wounded in the thigh by a bayonet, also made his escape. The loss sustained by the garrisons was about two hundred and fifty men. That of the enemy was supposed to be much more considerable; but Sir Henry Clinton, in his official letter, states it at less than two hundred killed, wounded, and missing.

"The boom and chains across the river were taken possession of with the forts, and the continental frigates and galleys were burnt to prevent them too from falling into the hands of the enemy.

"Fort Independence and Fort Constitution were evacuated the next day, and Putnam retreated to Fishkill. The same measures had been taken at Fort Constitution, as at forts Clinton and Montgomery, by sinking impediments in the river, and by stretching chains across it to stop the vessels of the enemy; but they were abandoned without even an attempt to defend them.

"After burning Continental village, where stores to a considerable amount had been deposited, Gen. Vaughan, with a strong detachment, proceeded up the river as far as Esopus, which he also destroyed. Gen. Putnam, whose army was by this time increased by the militia of Connecticut, New Jersey, and New York, *to six thousand men*, detached Gen. Parsons with two thousand, to repossess themselves of Peekskill, while with the residue he watched the progress of the enemy up the river.

"On the first intelligence of the capitulation of Burgoyne, expresses had been dispatched by Putnam to Gates, pressing for reinforcements of continental troops, and *near five thousand men from that army*

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hastened to his aid. Before their arrival, Gen. Vaughan had proceeded from Esopus down the river, and having reduced to ashes forts Montgomery and Clinton, and every village and almost every private house in his power, returned to New York, from whence a reinforcement was then about to sail for Gen. Howe.

"The military stores which this expedition threw into the hands of the enemy were very considerable. The Highlands having been always considered as a position which, more than any other, united the advantages of convenience and security, magazines to a large amount had been collected there. Some of these were removed, but by far the greater part of them were lost. Much labor and money had been expended on the forts, and on the works in the river which had been demolished." (Life of Washington, vol. iii., p. 292, etc.)

The following letters from Gov. Clinton and Gen. Putnam are copied from Prof. Sparks' compilation of the writings of Gen. Washington:

EXTRACT OF A LETTER FROM GOV. CLINTON TO GEN. WASHINGTON, dated New Windsor, 9th of October, 1777.

"DEAR GENERAL—I have to inform you, in consequence of intelligence received by Gen. Putnam from Gen. Parsons, who lay with his brigade at the White Plains, of the enemy's having received reinforcements from Europe at New York, and that by their movements there was reason to believe they intended an attack on Peekskill, and to possess themselves of the passes in the Highlands, the general immediately wrote to me these circumstances; and, to prevent if possible the disagreeable consequences that might arise if the army at the different posts was not timely reinforced, I ordered that part of the militia of this state, that had not already marched to the northward, to move, and part of them to join Gen. Putnam, and the remainder to reinforce the posts of Fort Montgomery and Fort

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Clinton; but, it being a critical time with the yeomanry, as they had not yet sown their grain, and there being at that time no appearance of the enemy, they were extremely restless and uneasy. They solicited Gen. Putnam for leave to return, and many of them went home without his permission. *Urged by these considerations, he thought proper to dismiss a part of them.*

"As I thought it *essentially necessary*, that they should remain in the field for some time, in order to check the progress of the enemy, should they attempt to put their designs in execution, I issued another order for one half immediately to march, part of them to join Gen. Putnam, and a sufficient number to reinforce the *forts and the pass at Sidman's bridge, at the mouth of the clove;* and, in order to induce them to turn out with greater alacrity, I thought it necessary to fix their time of service to one month, at the expiration of which time they were to be relieved by the other half. While this was in agitation, and before an arrangement could possibly be made by the respective officers, as to what part of them should serve for the first month, they were not so expeditious as was absolutely necessary, which the event has fully evinced. A number of the enemy's ships made their appearance on the 3d instant in Tarrytown bay, whence they weighed anchor the next day, being joined by several ships of war and transports from New York. They proceeded up the river as high as King's ferry, and at daybreak on Sunday, the 5th, landed a considerable body of men on Verplanck's point.

"As I was apprehensive, from many circumstances, that an attack on the forts was intended, I dispatched Maj. Logan, an alert officer, who was well acquainted with the ground, on Sunday evening through the mountains to reconnoiter, and if possible gain intelligence of the enemy's motions. The major returned about nine o'clock on Monday, informing me that from the best intelligence he could procure, and the rowing of the

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boats, he had reason to believe they had landed a considerable force on the west side of the river, and at Dunderberg; but as the morning was foggy, it was impossible to discern them, so as to form any judgment of their numbers." Here Gov. Clinton gives a detailed account of his detaching such parties as his limited means would justify, "in order (he says) to give the enemy a check, and retard their movements till I could receive a reinforcement from Gen. Putnam, to whom I had sent an express for that purpose; [and adds] after as obstinate a resistance as our situation and the weakness of the garrison would admit, having defended the works from two o'clock till the dusk of the evening, the enemy, by the superiority of numbers, forced the works on all sides. *The want of men prevented us from sustaining and supporting every part, having received no reinforcement from Gen. Putnam.*

"I have to add, that *by some fatality* the two continental frigates were lost, *they having been ordered down by Gen. Putnam for the defence of the chain;* but, being badly manned, they could not be got off in time, though I ordered the ship Congress to proceed to Fort Constitution the day before the attack, lest she should meet with a disaster; and the ship Montgomery, which lay near the chain, it being the ebb of tide and the wind falling, Capt. Hodge was constrained to set her on fire to prevent her from falling into the hands of the enemy. The Congress unfortunately getting aground on the flat near Fort Constitution, shared the same fate. Fort Constitution, being destitute of troops to defend it, was evacuated, after bringing off part of the stores.

"The army who attacked us, by the lowest account, consisted of three thousand, chiefly of British and Hessian troops. The garrison of both our posts did not exceed six hundred men, and many of these unarmed militia. The ordinary garrison was thus reduced by detaching Maj. Moffat with *two hundred men to the post at Sidman's bridge, Col. Malcom's regiment being re-*

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moved from thence, and sixty men on Anthony's nose, by Gen. Putnam's orders, received the day before the action. I have only to add, that where great losses are sustained, however unavoidable, public censure is generally the consequence to those who are immediately concerned. If in the present instance this should be the case, I wish, *so far as it relates to Fort Montgomery and its dependencies*, it may fall on me alone; for I should be guilty of the greatest injustice, were I not to declare, that the officers and men under me of the different corps behaved with the greatest spirit and bravery."

EXTRACT OF A LETTER FROM GEN. PUTNAM TO GEN. WASHINGTON, dated Fishkill, 8th October, 1777.

"DEAR GENERAL—It is with the utmost reluctance I now sit down to inform you, that the enemy, after making a variety of movements up and down the North river, landed on the morning of the 3d instant about three thousand men at Tarrytown; and, *after making an excursion about five miles up the country*, they returned and re-embarked the morning following, advanced up near King's ferry, and landed on the east side of the river; but in the evening part of them re-embarked, and the morning after landed a little above King's ferry, on the west side. The morning being so exceedingly foggy concealed their scheme, and prevented us from gaining any idea as to the number of troops they landed. In about three hours we discovered a large fire at the ferry, which we imagined to be the store-houses; upon which *it was thought they only landed with a view of destroying the said houses.* The picket and scouts, which we had out, could not learn the exact number of the enemy that were remaining on the east side of the river; but, from the best accounts, they were about fifteen hundred. At the same time a number of ships and galleys, with about forty flat-boats, made every appearance of their intention to land troops,

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both at Fort Independence and Peekskill landing. These circumstances, and my strength being not more than twelve hundred continental troops and three hundred militia, *prevented me from detaching a party to attack the enemy that day on the east side of the river.*

"After we had thought it *impracticable to quit the heights, which we had then possession of, and attack the enemy*, Brig. Gen. Parsons [Ajdt. Gen. Root] and myself went to reconnoiter the ground near the enemy; and on our return from thence we were alarmed with a heavy and hot firing, both of small-arms and cannon, at Fort Montgomery, which immediately convinced me that the enemy had landed a large body of men in the morning at the time and place before-mentioned. *Upon which I immediately detached five hundred men to reinforce the garrison;* but before they could possibly cross the river to their assistance, the enemy, far superior in numbers, had possessed themselves of the fort. Never did men behave with more spirit and activity, than our troops upon this occasion. They repulsed the enemy three times, who were in number at least five to one."

By the foregoing documents, the causes which led to the unfortunate results upon this occasion are made too apparent to escape the notice of the most casual reader. Let it be remembered, that Gen. Burgoyne was making his way to the head waters of the Hudson; and that nothing could comport more with the interests of the enemy, than for the British troops in New York city to form a junction with Burgoyne at Albany. That this would be attempted was so obvious to Gen. Washington, that he was constantly reiterating to the commandant at Peekskill to be prepared for that event. Immense expense had been incurred in preparations to guard against the execution of such project. But it is a little extraordinary, that although Gen. Putnam, according to Humphreys, on account of the smallness of his force, "repeatedly informed the commander-in-chief, that the posts committed to his charge must, in

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all probability, be lost in case an attack should be made upon them; and that, circumstanced as he was, he could not be responsible for the consequences," should at the same time discharge the militia under his command, before the expiration of the term for which they were drafted. He had evidently no expectation of maintaining these posts. His besetting sin seems to have been want of confidence of success, which paralyzed his efforts.

When the enemy landed a part of their forces at Verplanck's point, which might naturally have been supposed a feint, intended for deception, Gen. Putnam, instead of attempting to annoy them in the least, or to reinforce the forts, fled instantly to the heights in his rear. His conjectures in regard to the objects of the expedition were every thing but that which was most obvious. He thought there were indications that the enemy "intended to land troops, both at Fort Independence and at Peekskill landing;" and, on discovering a fire on the west side of the river, where there were some store-houses of very trifling consequence, he concluded the burning of them was the sole purpose of their landing on that side.

But not being fully satisfied as to the destination of the enemy, and for what purpose so large an armament had been prepared, he undertook a reconnoitering jaunt down to King's ferry; taking with him the only general besides himself at the post, and his adjutant-general, leaving at head-quarters his aid-de-camp alone, a young man about twenty-four years of age. It could hardly have been expected, that the senior officer remaining in camp would take the responsibility of detaching any portion of the troops, at the request of an officer commanding another post, or from other considerations; nor, it may be presumed, was it intended, or orders would have been given by Gen. Putnam to that effect. On hearing the firing at Fort Montgomery, however, patriotism prevailed with Col. Wyllys

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over discipline, and he immediately despatched five hundred men to the scene of action, but who, as has been seen, arrived too late. Col. [then Major] Humphreys deserved great praise for the part he took upon the occasion.

At this critical juncture, was not Gen. Putnam required by every principle of patriotism, as well as a regard to his own fame as commandant of the station, to have remained at head-quarters, retaining Gen. Parsons and the adjutant-general, and sent one or more alert subaltern officers to look out for the movements of the enemy? He took a tour of some twelve miles, and was absent many hours, not having returned to camp till after the fatal engagement had commenced, which ended in the utter prostration of the American arms, producing in its consequences a train of infinite evils to the country. Had Gen. Putnam remained at his post, so that the express from Gov. Clinton could have found him, who was despatched about ten o'clock in the morning, and the assault on the forts was not made till two o'clock in the afternoon; or had he, without any call from Clinton, as was obviously his duty, thrown reinforcements into forts Montgomery and Clinton, a very different result, in all human probability, would have taken place.

But of all the transactions connected with this eventful drama, none seem more ill-advised, than the removal of Malcom's regiment from Sedman's bridge at the mouth of the Clove, thereby throwing open the gate for the ingress of the enemy. This was done by orders from Gen. Putnam, issued the next day after the appearance of the expedition at Tarrytown bay. Sir Henry Clinton was doubtless advised that a regiment occupied this post, and, not being aware of its removal, took a more difficult course. Gov. Clinton, however, deeming it of the utmost importance to have this pass guarded, immediately detached from Fort Montgomery two hundred men for the purpose; which by thus

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weakening the garrison, not improbably caused the loss of the fort. The Clove is a cleft or opening of the highlands or mountains, situated a little south of west from Fort Montgomery, which renders a passage to it from that quarter quite practicable. There is now a railroad on this route. Malcom's regiment went to swell the *corps de reserve* upon the heights.

There are errors in Gen. Putnam's official report to the commander-in-chief of this disaster not unworthy of notice. Gov. Clinton, whose report is dated a day later than Putnam's, and who no doubt took more pains than he to obtain correct information, makes no mention of "the enemy's landing about three thousand men at Tarrytown, and making an excursion of about five miles up the country." This would have been to "march up the hill, and then march down again," with a witness. There could be no use in such an enterprise. The enemy had no time to spare in such jaunts of pleasure.

The general might have saved the trouble of excusing himself for not attacking the enemy that remained on the east side of the river, at the time he mentions, which was after he discovered the fire on the opposite side. At that time there were few or no enemies for him to attack, had he been ever so much disposed. The main body evidently landed simultaneously on the west side of the river, and marched immediately for the American forts. And however desirous they might be to delude Gen. Putnam with a vain show, they had not many men to spare for the purpose, certainly not fifteen hundred.

Marshall speaks of "the small detachment left at Verplanck's point." Be the number what they might, the objection made by Gen. Putnam for not attacking them on the day mentioned, seems a substantial reason for his doing so, before they were further reinforced as he expected. But in case the indications of which he takes notice had not appeared, it seems he would have

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detached a party to attack *his fifteen hundred men in buckram.* Why not march with his whole force, which was equal to the supposed number of the enemy, and fight the battle in person? It would have been a glorious opportunity for the general to have served his country, and to acquire a renown far more substantial than that obtained through the agency of others.

It is not easy to perceive the impracticability of Putnam's quitting the heights, as he states; he had only to order his men *to the right-about face,* and then march back to the place from whence he came without fear of meeting an enemy to oppose him. The British, at any rate, had no cause to envy Putnam's sagacity in obtaining his position; their route did not lie in that direction, and therefore he was in no danger of being disturbed.

There is *a mistake* in Gen. Putnam's letter, in saying he "detached five hundred men to reinforce the garrison." This was done by Col. Wyllys before the general's return to head-quarters.

Since writing the foregoing, I am informed by an intelligent, elderly gentleman, who was born and brought up near Peekskill, that Gen. Putnam upon this occasion did not halt until he arrived at Haight's tavern, about midway of the highlands, and between five and six miles from Peekskill. King's ferry is ten miles below Peekskill. Putnam, therefore, with his two generals, must have ridden in their tour at least thirty miles. A pretty extensive airing, when the awful crisis in which it occurred is taken into consideration. When these reconnoiterers returned to head-quarters, as might be, and probably was, expected, the fate of the day was sealed; and they had only to continue their retreat through the highlands to Fishkill.

The course taken in this case will no doubt be justified by many, in consequence of their preconceived opinions of the courage, patriotism, and warlike propensities of Israel Putnam.

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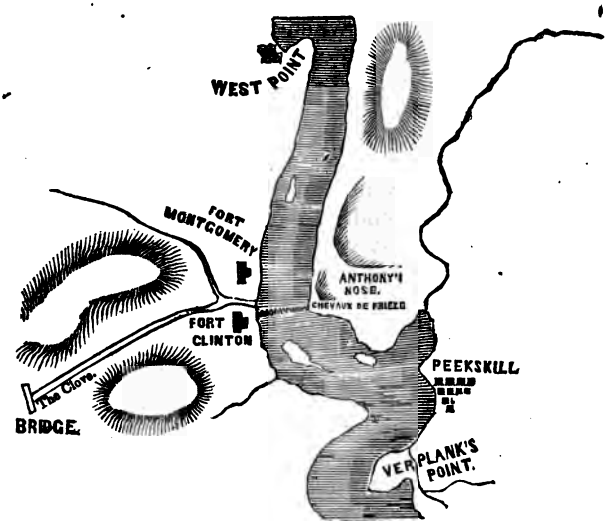
The following is a diagram of the scene of action. There are defects in it; the mountains, as well as the brook in the Clove, are not well represented. There was a run of water, as has been seen, between the forts. The drawing however is sufficiently accurate for the purpose intended. The reader will perceive that the opening of the Clove, at Sedman's bridge, was the key to the avenue leading to the forts, which afforded a convenient course for the march of troops.



The withdrawing by Gen. Putnam of the regiment stationed at this pass, under existing circumstances, is, it is believed, the most extraordinary military movement on record. He also, as has been seen, drew sixty men from the station called Anthony's nose. With these and his troops at Peekskill, composing a corps of fifteen hundred, he immediately repaired to the mountains, where he remained inactive; thus abandoning

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the most important post that could be committed to his charge without firing a gun. The direful consequences resulting from this dereliction of duty are known, and will probably never be forgotten by the descendants of those whose houses were committed to the flames, and other property destroyed by the invading foe.

I shall now make copious extracts from the Life of Alexander Hamilton, by his son John C. Hamilton; and from the Writings of George Washington, edited by Jared Sparks: containing letters from Gen. Washington, and Col. Hamilton, his aid-de-camp, which powerfully illustrate the patriotism, character, and services of Gen. Putnam.

From the Life of Hamilton.

"While the advance of Burgoyne was looked upon with consternation; by a series of unparalleled sufferings which no energy could surmount, he was gradually broken down, until a brief contest compelled him to surrender at Saratoga.

"Intelligence of this event reached the head-quarters of Washington at the close of the month of October, [1777,] a few days after his army had removed to Whitemarsh, and he immediately addressed a letter to Gates, in which, after congratulating him on his success, and expressing his regret that a matter of such magnitude should have reached him by report only, or through the chance of letters, instead of an authentic communication under his own signature, he says—'Our affairs having terminated to the northward, I have, by the advice of the general officers, sent Col. Hamilton, one of my aids, to lay before you a full statement of our situation, and that of the enemy in this quarter. He is well informed upon the subject, and will deliver my sentiments upon the plan of operations that is now necessary to be pursued. I think it improper to enter into a detail. From Col. Hamilton, you will have a clear and com-

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prehensive view of things; and I persuade myself you will do every thing in your power to facilitate the objects I have in contemplation.' On the 30th of October, Col. Hamilton departed, under the following 'instructions.'

* * * * "'You are so fully acquainted with the principal points on which you are sent, namely, the state of our army and the situation of the enemy, that I shall not enlarge on those heads. What you are chiefly to attend to, is to point out, in the clearest and fullest manner, to Gen. Gates, the absolute necessity there is for his detaching a very considerable part of the army at present under his command to the reinforcement of this; a measure that will in all probability reduce Gen. Howe to the same situation in which Gen. Burgoyne now is, should he attempt to remain in Philadelphia without being able to remove the obstructions in the Delaware, and open a free communication with his shipping. The force, which the members of the council of war judge it safe and expedient to draw down at present, are the three New Hampshire and fifteen Massachusetts regiments, with Lee's and Jackson's of the sixteen additional. * * * *

"I have understood that Gen. Gates has already detached Nixon's and Glover's brigades to join Gen. Putnam, and Gen. Dickinson informs me Sir Henry Clinton has come down the river with his whole force; if this be a fact, you are to desire Gen. Putnam to send the two brigades forward, *with the greatest expedition*, as there can be no occasion for them there.

"I expect you will meet Col. Morgan's corps upon their way down; if you do, let them know how essential their services are to us, and desire the colonel or commanding officer to hasten their march as much as is consistent with the health of the men after their late fatigues. G. W.

"P. S. I ordered the detachment belonging to Gen. McDougal's division to come forward. If you meet

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them, direct those belonging to Greene's, Angel's, Chandler's, and Duryee's regiments not to cross the Delaware, but to proceed to Red Bank.'

"Col. Hamilton proceeded by way of New Windsor to Fishkill, the head-quarters of Gen. Putnam, from whence he addressed the following letter to Gen. Washington, on the 2d of November:

"'DEAR SIR—I lodged last night in the neighborhood of New Windsor. This morning I met Col. Morgan with his corps, about a mile from it, in march for head-quarters.

"I have directed Gen. Putnam, *in your name*, to send forward *with all dispatch* to join you, the two continental brigades and Warner's militia brigade; this last is to serve till the latter end of this month. * * * Neither Lee's nor Jackson's regiments, nor the detachment belonging to Gen. McDougal's division, have yet marched. I have urged their being sent, and an order has been dispatched for their instantly proceeding. * * * Gen. Poor's brigade has just arrived here; they will proceed to join you with all expedition.'

"On Hamilton's arrival at Albany, he had an interview with Gen. Gates, the result of which is stated in the following letter to Gen. Washington.

"'Albany, Nov. 4th, 1777.

"'DEAR SIR—I arrived here yesterday at noon, and waited on Gen. Gates immediately on the business of my mission, but was very sorry to find his ideas did not correspond with yours, for drawing off the number of troops you directed. I used every argument in my power to convince him of the propriety of the measure, but he was inflexible in the opinion that two brigades, at least, of continental troops should remain in and near this place. * * * All I could effect was to have one brigade dispatched in addition to those already marched. I found myself infinitely embarrassed, and was at a loss how to act.'

"Col. Hamilton, having concluded his mission to Gen.

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Gates, returned to New Windsor, whence, on the 10th of November, he addressed the commander-in-chief to this effect:

"'DEAR SIR—I arrived here last night from Albany. Having given Gen. Gates a little time to recollect himself, I renewed my remonstrance on the necessity and propriety of sending you more than one brigade of the three he had detained with him, and finally prevailed upon him to give orders for Glover's, in addition to Patterson's brigade, to march this way. * * *

"I am pained beyond expression to inform your excellency that on my arrival here, I find every thing has been neglected and deranged by Gen. Putnam, and that the two brigades, Poor's and Learned's, still remain here and on the other side of the river at Fishkill. Col. Warner's militia, I am told, have been drawn to Peekskill, to aid in an expedition against New York, which it seems is, at this time, the hobby-horse with Gen. Putnam. Not the least attention has been paid to my order *in your name* for a detachment of one thousand men from the troops hitherto stationed at this post. Every thing is sacrificed to the whim of taking New York.

"The two brigades of Poor and Learned, it appears, would not march for want of money and necessaries; several of the regiments having received no pay for six or eight months past. There has been a high mutiny among the former on this account, in which a captain killed a man, and was himself shot by his comrade. These difficulties, for want of proper management, have stopped the troops from proceeding. Gov. Clinton has been the only man who has done any thing towards removing them, but for want of Gen. Putnam's co-operation has not been able to effect it. He has only been able to prevail with Learned's brigade to agree to march to Goshen, in hopes, by getting them once on the go, to induce them to continue their march. On coming here, I immediately sent for Col. Bailey, who

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now commands Learned's brigade, and persuaded him to carry the brigade on to head-quarters as fast as possible. This he expects to effect by means of six thousand dollars, which Gov. Clinton was kind enough to borrow for me, and which Col. Bailey thinks will keep the men in good humor till they join you. They marched this morning towards Goshen.

"The plan I before laid having been totally deranged, a new one has become necessary. It is now too late to send Warner's militia; by the time they reached you, their term of service would be out. The motive for sending them, which was to give you a speedy reinforcement, has, by the past delay, been superseded.

"By Gov. Clinton's advice, I have sent an order in the most emphatical terms to Gen. Putnam, immediately to dispatch all the continental troops under him to your assistance, and to detain the militia instead of them.

"My opinion is, that the only present use for troops in this quarter is to protect the country from the depredations of little plundering parties, and for carrying on the works necessary for the defence of the rivers. Nothing more ought to be thought of. 'Tis only wasting time and misapplying men to employ them in a suicidal parade against New York; for in this it will undoubtedly terminate. New York is no object, if it could be taken, and to take it would require more men than could be spared from more substantial purposes. Gov. Clinton's ideas coincide with mine. He thinks that there is no need of more continental troops here than a few to give a spur to the militia in working upon the fortifications. In pursuance of this, I have given the directions before mentioned. If Gen. Putnam attends to them, the troops under him may be with you nearly as early as any of the others, *though he has unluckily marched them down to Tarrytown*, and Gen. Glover's brigade, when it gets up, will be more than sufficient to answer the true end of this post.

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"If your excellency agrees with me in opinion, it will be well to send instant directions to Gen. Putnam to pursue the object I have mentioned, for I doubt whether he will attend to any thing I shall say, *notwithstanding it comes in the shape of a positive order.* I fear, unless you interpose, the works here will go on so feebly for want of men, that they will not be completed in time. Gov. Clinton will do every thing in his power. I wish Gen. Putnam was recalled from the command of this post, and Gov. Clinton would accept it: *the blunders* and *caprices* of the former are endless. Believe me, sir, nobody can be more impressed with the importance of forwarding the reinforcements, coming to you, in all speed, nor could anybody have endeavored to promote it more than I have done; but the *ignorance* of some, and the *design* of others, have been almost insuperable obstacles. As soon as I get Gen. Poor's brigade in march, I shall proceed to Gen. Putnam's at Peekskill.'

"On the 12th of November, he addressed another letter to Gen. Washington, in which he says—'By a letter of yesterday, Gen. Poor informs me he would certainly march this morning. I must do him the justice to say, he appears solicitous to join you, and that I believe the past delay is not owing to any fault of his, *but is wholly chargeable to Gen. Putnam.* Indeed, sir, I owe it to the service to say, that *every part of this gentleman's conduct is marked with blunders and negligence, and gives general disgust.* * * * In a letter from Gen. Putnam, just now received by Gov. Clinton, he appears to have been the 10th at White Plains. I have had no answer to my last application.'"

In a letter from Col. Hamilton to Gen. Washington, dated at Peekskill, November 15th, he says:

"Gen. Poor's brigade crossed the ferry day before yesterday. Two York regiments, Cortland's and Livingston's, are with them; they were unwilling to be separated from the brigade, and the brigade from them. Gen. Putnam was unwilling to keep them with him.

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The troops now remaining with Gen. Putnam, will amount to about the number you intended, though they are not exactly the same. He had detached Col. Webb's regiment to you. He *says* the troops with him are not in a condition to march, being destitute of shoes, stockings, and other necessaries; but I believe the true reasons of his being unwilling to pursue the mode pointed out by you, were his aversion to the York troops, and his desire to retain Gen. Parsons with him."

"Col. Hamilton had the gratification of receiving a letter from Gen. Washington, dated November 15th, 1777, in which he says:

"'DEAR SIR—I have duly received your several favors from the time you left me to that of the 12th instant. I approve entirely of all the steps you have taken, and have only to wish that the exertions of those you have had to deal with had kept pace with your zeal and good intentions.'

"While doing justice to the subject of this memoir, *it is painful to raise the veil*, and to dissipate those pleasing illusions, cherished from childhood towards every actor in the revolutionary struggle, which have ripened into a sentiment little short of personal attachment, *more especially when the person inculpated is Gen. Putnam. * * * But higher duties are to be fulfilled than to gratify national pride, and the story of the revolution is but half told when those difficulties are concealed, which were encountered and overcome by the men who achieved the liberty of their country.*

"The consequence of the delays which had been interposed in reinforcing the army were soon and sadly felt. The fall of Fort Mifflin was a prelude to the evacuation of Red Bank. A reinforcement from New York enabled Cornwallis, with a detachment of two thousand men, to cross the river. From the procrastination in forming a junction with Glover's brigade, then on their march through the Jersies, Gen. Greene found himself too weak to intercept his adversary, and on the

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night of the 20th of November, *after the waste of so many lives, the water guard was destroyed, and the defence of the Delaware fell into the hands of the enemy.* Howe, strengthened by the succours which now reached him, was enabled to hold possession of Philadelphia during the ensuing winter, 'though just before the reduction of the forts, he balanced upon the point of quitting that city.'

"A letter from Gen. Washington to congress, of the 10th of December, in which he mentions the movement of the enemy to Chesnut hill, and their sudden retreat, expresses a 'regret that they had not come to an engagement.' The retreat was unquestionably owing to a discovery of the increased strength of the Americans. From this may be inferred Howe's condition at that moment, and it justifies the conclusion, that a *prompt obedience* to the orders, conveyed by Hamilton, *on the part of Gates and Putnam*, would not only have saved the defences of the river, so long and gallantly maintained, but by enabling the Americans to take a strong position in the vicinity of Red Bank, would have cut off the communication between the British army and fleet, and fulfilling Washington's prophecy, *Howe would have been reduced to the situation of Burgoyne*, thus probably terminating the war in the second year of our independence.

"The conduct of Putnam, on this occasion, entered deeply into the breast of Washington; and we find him, in a letter from Valley Forge, dated March 6, 1778, thus expressing himself, in reference to the command of Rhode Island: '*They* also know with more certainty than I do, what will be the determination of congress respecting Gen. Putnam; and, of course, whether the appointment of him to such a command as that at Rhode Island would fall within their views. It being incumbent on me to observe, that with *such materials as I am furnished, the work must go on*,—whether well or ill is another matter. If, therefore, *he*

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and others are not laid aside, they must be placed where they can least injure the service.'"

FROM SPARKS' WRITINGS OF GEORGE WASHINGTON.

Extract of a letter from Gen. Washington to Gen. Putnam:

"Camp, 13th November, 1777.

"DEAR SIR—The situation of our affairs in this quarter calls for every aid and every effort. I therefore desire, that, *without a moment's loss of time*, you will detach as many effective rank and file, under proper generals and other officers, as will make the whole number, including those with Gen. McDougal, amount to twenty-five hundred privates and non-commissioned fit for duty.

"I must urge you, by every motive, to send on this detachment without delay. *No considerations are to prevent it.* It is our first object to defeat, if possible, the army now opposed to us here. That the passes in the highlands may be perfectly secure, you will immediately call in all your forces now on command at outposts. You must not think of covering a whole country by dividing them; and when they are ordered in and drawn together, they will be fully competent to repel any attempt that can be made from the enemy below, in their present situation. Besides, if you are threatened with an attack, you must get what aid you can from the militia. That you may not *hesitate* about complying with this order, you are to consider it as *peremptory, and not to be dispensed with.* Col. Malcom's regiment will form a part of the detachment." (MS. letter.)

Professor Sparks adds, in a note:

"Gen. Putnam had formed a plan for a separate attack on the enemy at *Staten Island, Paulus Hook, York Island,* and *Long Island,* at the same time. He had obtained *accurate knowledge* of the enemy's

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strength, and *Gov. Trumbull had encouraged him to expect large reinforcements of militia from Connecticut for this purpose, which, with the continental forces under his command, and the aids he might procure from New York and New Jersey, he believed would enable him to execute his design.* The above order from Gen. Washington put an end to the project." (Vol. v. p. 72.)

WASHINGTON TO PUTNAM.

"Head-quarters, 19th Nov., 1777.

"DEAR SIR—I am favored with yours of the 14th. *I could have wished that the regiments I had ordered had come on,* because I do not like brigades to be broken by detachment. The urgency of Col. Hamilton's letter was owing to his knowledge of our wants in this quarter, and *to a certainty there was no danger from New York,* if you sent away all the continental troops that were with you, and waited to replace them by those expected down the river. I cannot but say there has been more delay in the march of the troops, than I think necessary; and *I could wish that in future my orders may be immediately complied with, without arguing upon the propriety of them. If any accident ensues from obeying them, the fault will be upon me and not upon you.* Be pleased to inform me particularly of the corps that have marched and are to march, and by what routes they are directed, that I may know how to dispatch orders to meet them upon the road if necessary."

Mr. Sparks, in a note appended to this letter, gives the letter above alluded to from Col. Hamilton to Gen. Putnam; which, in a hasty examination of Hamilton's Life, escaped my notice, if, in fact, it be therein contained. He thus introduces it:

"On Col. Hamilton's return from Albany, after executing his mission to Gen. Gates, he found, when he arrived at New Windsor, that Gen. Putnam had not sent forward such reinforcements to Gen. Washington,

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as were expected. Gen. Putnam seems to have had *a special reluctance to part with these troops*, probably in consequence of *his favorite project against New York*. Col. Hamilton's letter was pointed and authoritative.

"'I cannot forbear confessing, (he observed,) that I am astonished and alarmed beyond measure to find that all his excellency's views have been hitherto frustrated, and that no single step of those I mentioned to you has been taken to afford him the aid he absolutely stands in need of, and by delaying which the *cause of America is put to the utmost conceivable hazard.* I so fully explained to you the general's situation, that I could not entertain a doubt you would make it the first object of your attention to reinforce him with that speed the exigency of affairs demanded; but I am sorry to say he will have too much reason to think other objects, in comparison with that insignificant one, have been uppermost. I speak freely and emphatically, because I tremble at the consequences of the delay that has happened. Sir Henry Clinton's reinforcement is probably by this time with Gen. Howe. This will give him a decisive superiority over our army. What may be the issue of such a state of things, I leave to the feelings of every *friend to his country capable of foreseeing consequences.* My expressions may perhaps have more warmth than is altogether proper, but they proceed from the overflowing of my heart in a matter where I conceive this continent essentially interested.

"I wrote you from Albany, and desired you would send a thousand continental troops, of those first proposed to be left with you. This I understand has not been done. How the non-compliance can be answered to Gen. Washington, you can best determine. *I now, sir, in the most explicit terms, by his excellency's authority, give it as a positive order from him, that all the continental troops under your command may be immediately marched to King's ferry, there to cross the river and hasten to reinforce the army under him.* The Massa-

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chusetts militia are to be detained instead of them, until the troops coming from the northward arrive. When they do, they will replace, as far as I am instructed, the troops you shall send away in consequence of this requisition. The general's idea of keeping troops this way does not extend further than covering the country from any little irruptions of small parties, and carrying on the works necessary for the security of the river. As to attacking New York, that he thinks ought to be out of the question at present. If men could be spared from the other really necessary objects, he would have no objection to attempting a diversion by way of New York, but nothing further.'" (MS. letter, New Windsor, Nov. 9th.)

Gen. Putnam enclosed a copy of this letter to Gen. Washington, and observed, "It contains some unjust and ungenerous reflections, for *I am conscious of having done every thing in my power to succor you as soon as possible.* I shall go to New Windsor this day to see Col. Hamilton, and, *until I have orders from you I cannot think of continuing at this post myself, and send* ALL THE TROOPS AWAY. *If they should go away, I am confident Gen. Howe will be further reinforced from this quarter.*" He then enumerated the number of regiments, which, from the best information he could get, he believed to be in New York. Such was the state of the particulars, which Gen. Washington had before him, when he wrote the above letter to Gen. Putnam.

Gen. Putnam, by his "too great intercourse with the enemy," stated by Chancellor Livingston, as will soon appear, had probably the means of knowing their condition in New York; and they in return were doubtless well informed of the strength and situation of the American army on the North river, before the expedition of Sir Henry Clinton. He appeared as loth to part with any of the troops under his command, as Pharoah was to permit the Jews of old to go out of Egypt; and

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nearly as much pains were required to wrest them from his clutches. The principal grounds for his neglect to comply with the orders of the commander-in-chief, privately given out, was his premeditated expedition against New York; but that he seriously intended such an enterprise on his own responsibility, under an expectation that the militia of the surrounding country would flock to his standard, after the experience they had of his generalship, is too absurd for a moment's consideration. He intimated the project to Gen. Gates, who remarked—"You may be sure they [the enemy] have nothing they care for in New York. Then why should you attack an empty town, *which you know to be untenable the moment they bring their men-of-war against it?*" (Vol. v., p. 130.)

WASHINGTON TO PUTNAM.

"Head-quarters, 2d December, 1777.

"DEAR SIR—The importance of the North river in the present contest, and the necessity of defending it, are subjects which have been so frequently and so fully discussed, and are so well understood, that it is unnecessary to enlarge upon them. These facts at once appear, when it is considered that it runs through a whole state; that it is the only passage by which the enemy from New York, or any part of our coast, can ever hope to co-operate with an army from Canada; that the possession of it is indispensably essential to preserve the communication between the eastern, middle, and southern states; and, further, that upon its security, in a great measure, depend our chief supplies of flour for the subsistence of such forces as we may have occasion for, in the course of the war, either in the eastern or southern departments, or in the country lying high up on the west side of it. These facts are familiar to all; *they are familiar to you.* I therefore request you, in the most urgent terms, to turn your most serious and active attention to this infinitely im-

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portant subject. Seize the present opportunity, and employ your whole force and all the means in your power for erecting and completing, as far as it shall be possible, such works and obstructions as may be necessary to defend and secure the river against any future attempts of the enemy. You will consult Gov. Clinton, Gen. Parsons, and the French engineer, Col. Radière, upon the occasion. By gaining the passage, you know the enemy have already laid waste and destroyed all the houses, mills, and towns accessible to them. Unless proper measures are taken to prevent them, they will renew their ravages in the spring, or as soon as the season will admit, and perhaps Albany, the only town in the state of any importance remaining in our hands, may undergo a like fate, and a general havoc and devastation take place.

"To prevent these evils, therefore, I shall expect you will exert every nerve, and employ your whole force in future, while and whenever it is practicable, in constructing and forwarding the proper works and means of defence. The troops must not be kept out on command, and acting in detachments to cover the country below, which is a consideration infinitely less important and interesting." (p. 176.)

Here Mr. Sparks observes, that "Gen. Washington wrote at the same time to Gov. Clinton, with a good deal of solicitude, on this subject. 'Gen. Gates was directed by congress (Washington remarked) to turn his views to this matter; but, from some proceedings that have just come to hand, he may be employed in the board of war, if it should be his choice. Should this be the case, nothing would be more pleasing to me, and I am convinced nothing would more advance the interest of the states, than for you to take the chief direction and superintendence of this business; and I shall be happy if the affairs of government will permit you. If they will, you may rest assured that no aid in my power to afford you shall be withheld, *and there*

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are no impediments on the score of delicacy or superior command, that shall not be removed!' To this complimentary and flattering proposal, Gov. Clinton replied: 'The legislature of this state is to meet on the 5th of next month. The variety of important business to be prepared for their consideration, and other affairs of government, will employ so great a part of my time, that I should not be able to give that attention to the works for the security of the river, which their importance, and the short time in which they ought to be completed, require. But you may rest assured, sir, that every leisure hour shall be faithfully devoted to them, and my advice and assistance shall not on any consideration be withheld from the person who shall be intrusted with the chief direction.'" (MS. letter, December 20th.

The following letter from the president of congress was also received by Gov. Clinton:

JOHN HANCOCK TO GOV. CLINTON.

"Philadelphia, March 26, 1777.

"SIR—As it is of the utmost importance that the fortresses in the highlands of New York should be effectually secured, and that for this purpose an active and vigilant officer should be appointed to take the command there, the congress have thought proper to fix upon you; being fully persuaded that you will exert yourself to render the forts and other works now erecting there fit for defence.

"They have likewise been pleased to promote you to the rank of brigadier-general in the army of the United States. I do myself the pleasure to enclose your commission, and have the honor to be, with respect, sir,

"Your most obd't and very humble servant,

"JOHN HANCOCK, President.

"GEN. CLINTON.

"You will please to acknowledge the receipt of this commission."

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Extract of a letter from Gen. Washington to Gen. Gates:

"Head-quarters, 2d December, 1777.

"SIR—By a resolve of congress of the 5th of November, you are directed, with a certain part of the northern army and the assistance of the militia of New York and the eastern states, to attempt the recovery of the posts upon the North river from the enemy, and to put them, if recovered, in the best posture of defence. The enemy having themselves evacuated forts Montgomery and Clinton, while the resolve was in agitation, but of which the congress could not at that time be informed, the first part falls of course; but the last deserves our most serious attention, as upon the possession of the North river depends the security of all the upper part of the government of New York, and the communication between the eastern, middle, and southern states. * * * My not having heard from you, as to what steps you have taken towards carrying into execution the resolve for repairing the old works, or building new ones, or when you might be expected down into that part of the country, *has made me hitherto delay recalling Gen. Putnam from the command.* But I beg leave to urge to you the necessity of *your presence* in that quarter, *as speedily as possible; for I fear few or no measures have yet been taken towards putting matters in a proper train for carrying on these important works.* Gen. George Clinton will necessarily be employed in the affairs of his government; but I have written to him, and I am certain he will call for and contribute all the aid that the state of New York can possibly afford. You are vested by the resolve of congress with authority to demand a proportionable share of assistance from the eastern states."

Extract of a letter from Gen. Washington to Gen Putnam:

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"Valley Forge, 25th January, 1778.

"DEAR SIR—I begin to be very apprehensive that the season will entirely pass away, before any thing material will be done for the defence of Hudson's river. You are well acquainted with the great necessity there is for having the works finished as soon as possible; and I must earnestly desire that the strictest attention may be paid to every matter which may contribute to finishing and putting them in a respectable state before the spring.

"I wish you had not waited for returns of the militia to furnish me with a statement of the troops in that quarter; and, if you do not get them in before you receive this, you will please to let me have an accurate return of the continental troops alone, it being absolutely necessary that I should know the strength of your command as soon as possible. I congratulate you on the success of your two *little parties* against the enemy, which I dare say will prevent their making so extensive excursions for some time at least." (Vol. v., p. 223.)

Gen. Putnam's reply to this letter is dated the 13th of February. After giving some account of the state of the works at the Highlands, he adds:

"Meigs's regiment, except those under inoculation for the small-pox, is at the White Plains; and until barracks can be fitted for their reception, I have thought best to continue them there, to cover the country from the incursions of the enemy. Dubois's regiment is unfit to be ordered on duty, *there being not one blanket in the regiment. Very few have either a shoe or a shirt, and most of them have neither stockings, breeches, nor overhalls. Several companies of enlisted artificers are in the same situation, and unable to work in the field.* Several hundred men are rendered useless, merely for want of necessary apparel, as no clothing is permitted

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to be stopped at this post. Gen. Parsons has returned to camp some time since, and takes upon himself the command to-morrow, when I shall set out for Connecticut." (Vol. v., p. 224.)

This latter, it will be observed, is dated the 13th of February: Gen. Putnam then held command at the Highlands, from which station he was not removed till the 16th of March following. Although an officer might be tolerated in saying metaphorically, that 'his men are bare-foot, and otherwise naked;' meaning thereby that they are very destitute of shoes and other proper clothing; but the above specifications seem rather too hyperbolical to be admitted into an official statement of facts. The general must have had in his mind the description given by the facetious Falstaff of the condition of his company:

"If I be not ashamed of my soldiers, I am a soused gurnet. No eye hath seen such scare-crows. I'll not march through Coventry with them, that's flat; nay, and the villains march wide betwixt the legs, as if they had gyves on; for, indeed, I had the most of them out of prison. *There's but a shirt and a half in all my company;* and the half shirt is two napkins, tacked together, and thrown over the shoulders, like a herald's coat without sleeves; and the shirt, to say the truth, stolen from my host at Saint Alban's, or the red-nose innkeeper of Daintry. But that's all one; they'll find linen enough on every hedge."

The extravagance of the above report of the condition of his troops by Gen. Putnam would naturally lead the reader to suspect the correctness of the many extraordinary relations detailed, through him, in the narrative of his life by Col. Humphreys.

Extract of a letter from Gen. Washington to Maj. Gen. McDougall.

"Head-quarters, Valley Forge, 16th March, 1778.

"Dear sir—I was favored with yours of the 17th

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ultimo, in due time, and should have proceeded immediately upon the business of the inquiry, had not Gen. Putnam's private affairs required his absence for some little time. I have appointed Brig. Gen. Huntington and Col. Wigglesworth to assist you in this matter; and enclosed you will find instructions empowering you, in conjunction with them, to carry on the inquiry agreeably to the resolve of congress. You will observe, by the words of the resolve, that the inquiry is to be made into the loss of forts Montgomery and Clinton; *and into the conduct of the principal officers commanding those forts.*

"Hence the officer commanding in chief in that department will be consequently involved in the inquiry; because, if he has been deficient in affording the proper support to those posts, when called upon to do it, the commandant and principal officers will of course make it appear by the evidence produced in their own justification. I am not certain that Gen. Putnam has returned to Fishkill; and I have therefore by the enclosed, which you will please to forward to him by express, given him notice that the inquiry is to be held, and have desired him to repair immediately to that post. Gen. Huntington and Col. Wigglesworth will set out as soon as they can make preparations for the journey.

"Upon your arrival at the Highlands, you are to take upon you the command of the different posts in that department, of which I have advised Gen. Putnam. Your time at first will be principally taken up with the business which you now have in hand; but I beg that your attention may be turned, as much as possible, to the completion of the works, or at least to putting them in such a state, that they may be able to resist a sudden attack of the enemy."

Mr. Sparks observes—"There had been a series of misapprehensions on the subject of constructing military works on the Highlands, as well as a train of ob-

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stacles to their progress. On the 5th of November, congress had appointed Gen. Gates to command in the Highlands, or rather had connected that post with the northern department, and invested him with ample powers to carry on the works; but, as he was made president of the board of war, he never entered upon these duties. Again, on the 18th of February, Gov. Clinton was requested to take the superintendence of the works; but the multiplicity of his civil employments made it necessary for him to decline the undertaking. Gen. McDougall took the command on the 28th of March. Two days previously Kosciusko arrived, who had been appointed engineer in the place of Radière. From that time the works were pressed forward with spirit. To the scientific skill and sedulous application of Kosciusko, the public was mainly indebted for the construction of the military defences at West Point."

GEN. WASHINGTON TO GEN. PUTNAM.

"Valley Forge, 16th March, 1778.

"DEAR SIR—The congress having, by a resolve of the 28th of November last, directed that an inquiry be made into the loss of forts Montgomery and Clinton, and into the conduct of the principal officers commanding these forts, I have appointed Maj. Gen. McDougall, Brig. Gen. Huntington, and Col. Wigglesworth, to carry the resolve into execution. It is more than probable that the conduct of the officer commanding at the time in that department will be involved in the inquiry; and I therefore desire, that you will repair immediately to Fishkill upon the receipt of this, to meet Gen. McDougall and the other gentlemen.

"Gen. McDougall is to take command of the posts in the Highlands. My reason for making this change is owing to the prejudices of the people, which, whether *well or ill grounded*, must be indulged; and I should think myself wanting in justice to the public and candor towards you, were I to continue you in a command,

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after I have been, almost in direct terms, informed that the people of the state of New York will not render the necessary support and assistance, while you remain at the head of that department. *When the inquiry is finished I desire that you will return to Connecticut and superintend the forwarding on the new levies with the greatest expedition.*"

Mr. Sparks remarks: "Not only were complaints uttered by the popular voice, but the political leaders of the state expressed discontent. Robert R. Livingston, then chancellor of New York, wrote to Gen. Washington on the subject in a pointed manner.

"'Your excellency,' said he, 'is not ignorant of the extent of Gen. Putnam's *capacity* and *diligence;* and how well soever they may qualify him for this important command, the prejudices to which his *imprudent lenity to the disaffected, and too great intercourse with the enemy,* have given rise, have greatly injured his influence. *How far the loss of Fort Montgomery and the subsequent ravages of the enemy are to be attributed to him,* I will not venture to say; as this will necessarily be determined by a court of inquiry, whose determinations I would not anticipate. Unfortunately for him, the current of popular opinion in this and the neighboring states, and as far as I can learn in the troops under his command, runs strongly against him. For my own part, *I respect his bravery and former services,* and sincerely lament that *his patriotism* will not suffer him to take the repose to which his age and past services justly entitle him.'" (MS. letter, Jan. 14th.)

Gov. Clinton also wrote pressingly to Gen. Washington requesting the removal of Gen. Putnam from the command at the Highlands; as may be seen in the governor's inedited manuscripts in the possession of the family, as I am informed by one of the executors of his estate.

Although Gen. Washington announced to Gen. Put-

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nam his removal from the post he held, in the most delicate manner, no one knew better than he, whether the prejudices against him were *well or ill grounded.* His directions to Gen. Putnam to return to Connecticut, after the inquiry was finished, "and superintend the forwarding on the new levies," struck me, at first view, as very singular, as the inquiry might lead to his suspension or dismission from the service. On reflection, I concluded there must have been an understanding between Gen. Washington and the members of the board he had appointed to act in this case, and that Gen. Putnam should be let off without censure; it being understood that he should, in future, be placed in situations less responsible at least, than those he had before occupied. Accordingly, as stated by Col. Humphreys, in his Life of Putnam, "upon full knowledge and mature deliberation of facts on the spot, they [the court of inquiry] reported the loss [of forts Montgomery and Clinton] to have been occasioned *by want of men*, and not by any *fault in the commanders.*"

The report is evidently very just, in respect to the defence of the forts, which were carried by superior numbers. And this was the fault of the commander of the department, whose force, as Marshall justly says, "was, if properly applied, more than competent to the defence of the forts against any numbers which could be spared from New York."

GEN. WASHINGTON TO GEN. PUTNAM.

"Head-quarters, Valley Forge, 29th April, 1778.

"DEAR SIR—I am pleased to hear that your prospects of procuring recruits and drafts for the army bore a more favorable appearance, than when you wrote before. I must beg you to forward on those for the regiments at this camp as fast as possible. I expect in a few days a general plan of operations for the campaign will be settled; *if one similar to that which you mention should be fixed upon, your assistance will still be*

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wanting in Connecticut to arrange and forward the militia, which we shall have occasion to draw from that state, and therefore I wish you to continue there till you hear from me."

Washington, it appears, was determined to adhere to his resolution, as before expressed in a letter from Valley Forge, dated March 6, 1778.

Extract of a letter from Gen. Washington to the president of congress:

"Middlebrook, 14th April, 1779.

"The plan of operations for the campaign being determined, a commanding officer was to be appointed for the Indian expedition. This command, according to all present appearances, will probably be of the second if not of the first importance for the campaign. The officer conducting it has a flattering prospect of acquiring more credit, than can be expected by any other this year; and he has the best reason to hope for success. Gen. Lee, from his situation, was out of the question; Gen. Schuyler (who, by the way, would have been most agreeable to me) was so uncertain of continuing in the army, that I could not appoint him; *Gen. Putnam I need not mention.* I therefore made the offer of it, for the appointment could not longer be delayed, to Gen. Gates, who was next in seniority."

I now return to the biography.

Horse Neck Expedition.

In order to cover the country adjoining to the *Sound*, and to support the garrison of *West Point*, in case of an attack, Maj. Gen. Putnam was stationed for the winter at Reading, in Connecticut. He had under his orders the brigade of New Hampshire, the two brigades of Connecticut, the corps of infantry commanded by Hazen, and that of cavalry by Sheldon.

About the *middle of winter*, while Gen. Putnam was on a visit to his out-post at Horse Neck, he found Gov. Tryon ad-

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vancing upon that town with a corps of fifteen hundred men. To oppose these Gen. Putnam had only a picquet of *one hundred and fifty men*, and two iron field-pieces, without horses or drag-ropes. He, however, planted his cannon on the high ground, by the meeting house, and retarded their approach by firing several times, until, perceiving the horse (supported by the infantry) about to charge, he ordered the picquet to provide for their safety, by retiring to a swamp inaccessible to horse, and secured his own, by plunging down the steep precipice at the church upon a full trot. This precipice is so steep, where he descended, as to have artificial stairs, composed of nearly one hundred stone steps, for the accommodation of foot-passengers. There the dragoons, who were but *a sword's length* from him, stopped short; for the declivity was so abrupt, that they ventured not to follow; and, before they could gain the valley, by going round the brow of the hill in the ordinary road, he was far enough beyond their reach. He continued his route, unmolested, to Stanford: from whence, having strengthened his picquet by the junction of some militia, he came back again, and, in turn, pursued Gov. Tryon in his retreat. As he rode down the precipice, one ball, of the many fired at him, went through his beaver: but Gov. Tryon, by way of compensation for spoiling his hat, sent him, soon afterwards, as a present, a complete suit of clothes.*

I will now give Marshall's account of this famous affair:

"*In July*, 1779, an expedition was determined on by the British against Connecticut, the command of which was given to Gov. Tryon, a major-general in the army.

"*On the 3d of July*, the troops destined for this expedition, amounting to about two thousand six hundred men, embarked at Frog's Neck, on the Sound, and sailing eastward reached New Haven bay on the 5th, in

* In this retreat, though with a very inferior force, Gen. Putnam made about fifty prisoners, part of whom were wounded, and the whole were the next day sent, under the escort of an officer's guard, to the British lines for exchange. It was for the humanity and kindness of Putnam to the wounded prisoners, that Gov. Tryon complimented him with the "suit of clothes."—Boston Edit.

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the morning. They effected their landing, took possession of the town, and destroyed whatever naval and military stores could be found. In the afternoon of the next day, they re-embarked, and proceeded eastward along the coast, to the village of Fairfield.

"Here they experienced rather more opposition than they had encountered at New Haven. The militia collected in great numbers, and showed a considerable degree of resolution. But, as they were unequal to the defence of the town, this flourishing village was reduced to ashes.

"The troops being re-embarked at Fairfield, the fleet crossed the Sound to Huntington bay, where it remained until the 11th, when it recrossed that water, after which the troops were landed, in the night, on the Cow Pasture, a peninsula on the east of the bay of Norwalk.

"About the same time, a much larger detachment from the British army directed its course towards Horse Neck, and made demonstrations of a design to penetrate into the country in that direction.

"On the first intelligence that Connecticut was invaded, Gen. Parsons, who was a native of that state, had been directed by Gen. Washington to hasten to the scene of action, for the purpose of giving confidence to his countrymen, and of guiding their efforts. Placing himself at the head of about *one hundred and fifty continental troops*, who were supported by considerable bodies of militia, he attacked the British in the morning of the 12th, so soon as they were in motion, and kept up through the day an irregular distant fire.

"In contemplation of the enterprise under Tryon, Sir Henry Clinton had ordered a considerable body of troops from Newport. On receiving intelligence from Gates of their embarkation, Gen. Washington directed Glover's brigade to be immediately put in motion, and to proceed with as much dispatch as possible towards the Hudson. While on the march, orders were given

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him to join the militia of Connecticut, and assist them in repelling the invaders of that state. Gen. Heath, with his division, was also directed to take a position about Ridgefield, or Bedford, so as to countenance and aid the militia as much as possible.

"But before the continental troops ordered to the relief of Connecticut could afford any real service, employment was found on the Hudson for the whole force under the immediate command of Sir Henry Clinton, and all further operations against that state were relinquished." (Vol. iv., p. 67.)

It is strange that Gen. Putnam, to whom Col. Humphreys says he was indebted for the narrative of his life, if he had any concern in the affair at Horse Neck, should not remember the season of the year in which it took place, fixing it at the most unpropitious and unusual period for such an enterprise, *about the middle of winter*, whereas it actually occurred in July. There can be no mistake in this case. Judge Marshall, from the documents before him, gives the day of the month, July 3d, when the expedition embarked, and, on the 12th, those who landed at Horse Neck were attacked by Gen. Parsons. Marshall, it is seen, makes no mention of Putnam as taking any part in this skirmish. *The one hundred and fifty continental troops*, said to be commanded by him, were under the orders of Gen. Parsons. Indeed, it does not appear that Gen. Putnam had any special command at this time, but on the contrary, that his duties were confined to the superintendence of the recruiting service in Connecticut. But as senior officer in that state, he seems to have assumed the action of his subordinates as his own.

If any orders were issued through Gen. Putnam, during his continuance in Connecticut in the service aforesaid, to forward, to particular posts, troops with their officers who were stationed in the vicinity of his quarters, it would appear to be done out of compliment to his rank.

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Provided Putnam had under his orders the respectable force stated by Humphreys, why were they not ordered to aid in expelling the invaders of Connecticut, instead of Gens. Parsons, Glover, and Heath, with the troops under their command? Marshall says nothing of the troops stationed at Reading. In fact, the biographers of Putnam are at variance in regard to his own station. Peabody fixes it at Danbury instead of Reading.

Marshall neglects to state that the continental troops retired to a swamp on account of its being inaccessible to horse, *when the British infantry, who supported the dragoons, might easily follow;* nor does he say there were any mounted men in the expedition. He is equally silent in regard to the fifty prisoners, said by Humphreys to be taken by the Americans, and sent with so much gallantry, by Gen. Putnam, to the British lines for exchange, the next day after the rencounter. The liberality of Putnam to the enemy, upon all occasions, seems unbounded. By the present, however, which he received from Tryon, in this instance, he had his reward. Such civilities, by the way, betwixt generals commanding opposing armies, appear very unique and improper. Where individuals fight on their own special account, the case is different. The eccentric John Randolph demanded of Henry Clay a new coat, in compensation for one which had been pierced with a ball in a duel betwixt those gentlemen. Whether Mr. Clay complied with the request, or not, the writer is not informed.

The main item of the drama remains still to be taken notice of. I allude to Humphreys' account of Gen. Putnam's miraculous escape, by descending the steep precipice in the vicinity of the scene of action. And here I find, that notwithstanding the story has been stereotyped again and again, introduced into school books, and exhibited in pictorial representations, it turns out after all to be fabulous; that Putnam did not de-

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scend the dangerous declivity, in manner and form stated, but glided down the hill in the most easy and safe style conceivable; although, it would appear, to the sore discomfort of his horse.

The following statement, from a relative of Gen. Putnam, may be relied upon as being derived from the general himself; and it puts a very different face upon the transaction to what has hitherto been universally believed to be the fact. He says—"It may not be amiss to state, that it is generally supposed Putnam came down the steps; we have seen engravings representing him thus. But he told Gen. Samuel Grosvernor, his son-in-law, the manner of the descent; '*The horse was well trained and sagacious, and came down the hill in a sliding manner, resting upon his haunches.*'" Here the general was as much at his ease as though sitting in an arm-chair at his head-quarters. This correction is contained in an article prepared not long since for a periodical, during the controversy concerning the validity of Humphreys' Life of Putnam.

Here the whole gist of the story, which has been made of so great account, the adventurous descent of the one hundred stairs, upon *a full trot*, is proved to be false by Gen. Putnam himself. And all the plates containing this representation are become useless. It is very extraordinary, that those who took part in the action, and others who resided near the scene of it, should not have contradicted this erroneous statement so long palmed upon the public.

I find that the Rev. Dr. Jedediah Morse, in his "Annals of the American Revolution," quotes Humphreys' account of the skirmish at Horse Neck entire, and gives his authority. He also gives a pictorial representation of Putnam's famous escape, in which the general is depicted as throwing the reins to his horse, extending both arms, and brandishing in his right hand his sword, as it were, in defiance of the enemy, in the same manner as he is represented by Col. Trumbull, in his paint-

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ing of the retreat from Bunker Hill. Mr. Otis, in his translation of Botta's History of the War, in default of the author's taking notice of the wonderful affair, foists into the work a plate representing Putnam's achievement, with an abridgment of Humphreys' account engraved upon it. This he introduces, very mal-apropos, where the history relates the landing of British troops at Verplanck's Point, previous to the storming of forts Montgomery and Clinton, and when Putnam was ascending to the Heights, instead of descending to the plain, as represented in the plate.

Mr. Charles A. Goodrich, in an abridged History of the United States, for the use of schools, gives the Horse Neck exploit, with an engraved representation of it. And Dr. Lieber, in his "Encyclopedia Americana," gives a brief account of the same; but prudently omits to state that the expedition took place *in the middle of winter*.

Col. Humphreys seems to have been the historical pioneer of the American revolutionary war; and his work has served as a text-book for future historians of that event, by reason that most writers of history prefer taking on trust what is ready prepared to their hand, rather than submit to the trouble of investigation for the purpose of ascertaining facts. Some authors, however, must be excepted in this case, particularly Marshall, who derived his information from original, authentic documents.

McPherson.

I will here give an instance of the great indulgence which Gen. Putnam was in the habit of granting to the enemy, as recorded by Humphreys.

In the early part of the winter of 1777, Gen. Putnam was directed to take post at Princeton, where he remained until the spring.

In the battle of Princeton, Capt. M'Pherson, of the 17th British regiment, a very worthy Scotchman, was desperately

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wounded in the lungs, and left with the dead. Upon Gen. Putnam's arrival there, he found him languishing in extreme distress, without a surgeon, without a *single accommodation*, and without a friend to solace the sinking spirit in the gloomy hour of death. He visited, and immediately caused every possible comfort to be administered to him. Capt. M'Pherson, who, contrary to all appearances, recovered, after having demonstrated to Gen. Putnam the dignified sense of obligations which a generous mind wishes not to conceal, one day, in familiar conversation, demanded, "Pray, sir, what countryman are you?"—"An American," answered the latter.—"Not a Yankee?" said the other.—"A full blooded one," replied the general. "By G—d, I am sorry for that," rejoined M'Pherson, "I did not think there could be so much goodness and generosity in an American, or, indeed, in anybody but a Scotchman."

While the recovery of Capt. M'Pherson was doubtful, he desired that Gen. Putnam would permit a friend in the British army at Brunswick to come and assist him in making HIS WILL. Gen. Putnam, who had then only fifty men in his whole command, was sadly embarrassed by the proposition. On the one hand, he was not content that a British officer should have an opportunity to spy out the weakness of his post; on the other, it was scarcely in his nature to refuse complying with a dictate of humanity. He luckily bethought himself of an expedient which he hastened to put in practice. A flag of truce was dispatched with Capt. M'Pherson's request, but under an injunction not to return with his friend until after dark. In the evening lights were placed in all the rooms of the college, and in every apartment of the vacant houses throughout the town. During the whole night, the fifty men, sometimes altogether, and sometimes in small detachments, were marched from different quarters by the house in which M'Pherson lay. Afterwards it was known that the officer who came on the visit, at his return, reported that Gen. Putnam's army, upon the most moderate calculation, could not consist of less than four or five thousand men.

This M'Pherson seems to have been a very troublesome subject, and probably unreasonable in his demands,

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in respect both to accommodations and attendance; and consequently his complaints to Gen. Putnam unfounded, whose *good nature*, of which so much is said by his biographer, he imposed upon. A half-dozen prisoners like M'Pherson, as he is here represented, would require the services of Putnam's whole command at this time.

It is not likely that the little finesse of parading fifty men, in the manner stated, had the least influence in deceiving the enemy in regard to the number of men stationed at Princeton. There were tories enough either there, or in its vicinity, to give them all the intelligence desired on this head. Besides, M'Pherson himself was doubtless aware of the paucity of troops at this post, and could give information on the subject to his friend. The British troops then in Jersey had gone into winter-quarters at Brunswick, and probably had no sufficient inducement to undertake an expedition at that season.

The precaution, however, which Gen. Putnam took to prevent his weakness being discovered by the enemy, shows that he considered the admission of a British officer into his camp hazardous; common prudence, therefore, one would think, should have induced him not to permit it, especially to gratify so stupid a request as that of M'Pherson, and when the British were treating American prisoners with savage barbarity.

Mrs. Margaret Coghlan.

The following sketch of some circumstances in the life of Mrs. Coghlan gives further proofs of the imprudent indulgence shown to the enemy by Gen. Putnam. The sketch is copied from Davis's Memoir of A. Burr, vol. i., p. 86.

"From the year 1778 to 1795, Mrs. Margaret Coghlan made no inconsiderable noise in the court and fashionable circles of Great Britain and France. She was the theme of conversation among the lords, the dukes, and the M. P's. Having become the victim, in early

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life, of licentious, dissolute, and extravagant conduct, alternately she was reveling in wealth, and then sunken in poverty. At length, in 1793, she published her own memoirs. Mrs. Coghlan was the daughter of Maj. Moncrieffe, of the British army, who was Lord Cornwallis's brigade-major. He had three wives. She was a daughter of the first. Mrs. Coghlan is introduced here, because her early history is intimately connected with the subject of these memoirs.

"In July, 1776, she resided in Elizabethtown, New Jersey. Her father was with Lord Percy, on Staten Island. In her memoirs, she says—'Thus destitute of friends, *I wrote to Gen. Putnam*, who instantly answered my letter by a very kind invitation to his house, assuring me that he respected my father, and was only his enemy in the field of battle; but, in private life, he or any of his family might always command his services. On the next day he sent Col. Webb, one of his aids-de-camp, to conduct me to New York. I was received with great tenderness, both by Mrs. Putnam and her daughters; and on the next day I was introduced by them to Gen. and Mrs. Washington, who likewise made it their study to show me every mark of regard. But *I seldom was allowed to be alone*, although sometimes I found an opportunity to escape to the gallery on the top of the house, where *my chief delight* was to view, with a telescope, our fleet and army at Staten Island. * * * * At length, a flag of truce arrived from Staten Island, with letters from Maj. Moncrieffe, demanding me; for he now considered me as a prisoner. Gen. Washington would not acquiesce in this demand, saying *I should remain a hostage for my father's good behavior.* I must here observe, that when Gen. Washington refused to deliver me up, the noble-minded Putnam, *as if it were by instinct, laid his hand on his sword, and with a violent oath, swore that my father's request should be granted.* The commander-in-chief, whose influence governed congress, soon

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prevailed on them to consider me as a person whose situation required their strict attention; and that I might not escape, they ordered me to Kingsbridge, where in justice I must say, that I was treated with the utmost tenderness. Gen. Mifflin there commanded. His lady was a most accomplished, beautiful woman.'"

The letter from Gen. Putnam, of which Mrs. Coghlan speaks, is found among the papers of Col. Burr, and is in the following words:

"'New York, July 26, 1776.

"'I should have answered your letter sooner, but had it not in my power to write you any thing satisfactory. *The omission of my title*, in Maj. Moncrieffe's letter, is a matter I regard not in the least; nor does it in any way influence my conduct in this affair, as you seem to imagine. Any political difference alters him not to me in a private capacity. As an officer, he is my enemy, and obliged to act as such, be his private sentiments what they will. As a man, I owe him no enmity; but far from it will, with pleasure, do any kind office in my power for him or any of his connections.

"'I have, agreeably to your desire, waited on his excellency to endeavor to obtain permission for you to go to Staten Island. He informs me, that Lieut. Col. Patterson, who came with the last flag, said he was empowered to offer the exchange of ——— for Gov. Skeene. And I am desired to inform you, if this exchange is made, you will have liberty to pass out with Gov. Skeene, but that no flag will be sent solely for that purpose.

"'Maj. William Livingston was lately here, and informed me that *you had an inclination to live in this city, and that all the ladies of your acquaintance having left town, and Mrs. Putnam and two daughters being here, proposes your staying with them.* If agreeable to you, be assured, miss, you will be sincerely welcome. You will, I think, be in a more probable way of accom-

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plishing the end you wish, that of seeing your father, and may depend upon every civility from, miss, your obedient servant, ISRAEL PUTNAM.'

"This letter is in the handwriting of Maj. Burr, and undoubtedly prepared by him for the signature of the general. Miss Moncrieffe was at this time in her fourteenth year. She had travelled, and, for one of her age, had mingled much in the world. She was accomplished and considered handsome.

"Burr perceived immediately that she was an extraordinary young woman. Eccentric and volatile, but endowed with talents, natural as well as acquired, of a peculiar character. Residing in the family of Gen. Putnam with her, and enjoying the opportunity of a close and intimate intercourse, he was enabled to judge of her qualifications, and came to the conclusion, notwithstanding her youth, that she was well calculated for a spy, and thought it not improbable that she might be employed in that capacity by the British. Maj. Burr suggested his suspicions to Gen. Putnam, and recommended that she be conveyed to her friends soon as might be convenient. She was soon after removed to Kingsbridge, where Gen. Mifflin commanded. After a short residence there, leave was granted for her departure to Staten Island."

There appears to have been a deep-laid scheme by Maj. Moncrieffe for gaining information of the condition of the American army by means of his daughter, and Gen. Putnam is pitched upon as the medium through which to effect the purpose. It would seem that Putnam and Moncrieffe had been previously acquainted, by the friendly and respectful manner in which the former speaks of the latter, in his letter to Miss Moncrieffe; and also by the familiar style used by the major in reference to Putnam, in the letter to his daughter, to which allusion is made, omitting his title. At any rate, either from this cause, or from the known indul-

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gent character of Putnam, Maj. Moncrieffe was anxious to have his daughter placed under his protection; and, by much shrewd management, the object was effected.

The idea held out by Miss M. of a wish to be conveyed to Staten Island was a sheer finesse, to get into the family of Gen. Putnam. Before her arrival in New York, Gen. Washington had no objection to her being sent to her father, on the first convenient occasion; but on her introduction to him, he at once perceived her capability of doing mischief, and that her father had a design in this affair. He accordingly ordered her to be strictly watched, to prevent her making communications to the enemy. The easy, confiding Gen. Putnam had no conception of any danger from this source.

Finally, when Maj. Moncrieffe found his plan was detected, and that he could expect no important intelligence from his daughter, he makes a bluster about her being retained as a prisoner, and demands that she be sent to him at Staten Island. Gen. Washington thought it, at the time, unsafe to permit her departure, although he afterwards consented to it. As to retaining her as "a hostage for her father's good behavior," if Washington made such a declaration, it must have been in joke. The manner, however, in which Gen. Putnam is said to have expressed himself, both by word and action, on Washington's refusal to accede to Moncrieffe's request, was supremely ridiculous.

The Military Conduct of Col. Aaron Burr and Gen. Putnam contrasted.

Col. Richard Platt, in a letter to Com. Valentine Morris, dated New York, January 27, 1814, in answer to a request of the latter, to be informed what was the reputation and services of Col. Burr during the revolutionary war? in the course of his remarks, says—"I must now present him [Burr] in contrast with his equals in rank, and his superiors in command.

"In September, 1777, the British came out of the city

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of New York, on the west side of the Hudson river, about two thousand strong, for the purpose of plundering and devastating the adjacent country, and capturing the public stores. Col. Burr was with his regiment, distant about thirty miles, when he heard of the enemy, and yet he was in their camp, and captured or destroyed their picket-guard before the next morning. For two days and nights he never slept. His regular force did not exceed three hundred men; but, by surprising the British pickets, he struck consternation into their ranks, and they fled with precipitation, leaving behind them their plunder and part of their stores. The following letters afford ample details." [An extract of one is here given.]

"Statement of Judge George Gardner, dated Newburgh, December 20, 1812:

"'In September, 1777, the regiment called Malcom's regiment lay at Suffren's, in the Clove, under the command of Lieut. Col. Burr. Intelligence having been received, that the enemy were in Hackensack in great force, and advancing into the country, Col. Burr immediately marched with the effective men, except a guard to take care of the camp. I understood that while we were on the march, an officer arrived express from Maj. Gen. Putnam, who commanded at Peekskill, recommending or ordering Col. Burr to *retire with the public stores to the mountains:* to which Col. Burr replied, that he could not run away from an enemy whom he had not seen, and that he would be answerable for the public stores and for his men.'

"Judge Gardner then relates the manner in which they proceeded, and surprised the picket-guard of the enemy, 'most of whom,' he says, 'were killed. The enemy, probably alarmed by these threatening appearances, retreated the next day, leaving behind them the greater part of the cattle and plunder they had taken.'"

Col. Platt then places in contrast, to this enterprise

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of Col. Burr, the conduct of Gen. Putnam, on a like occasion. "On the east side of the Hudson, at Peekskill," he observes, "was a major-general of our army, with an effective force of about two thousand men. The enemy advanced, and our general retired without engaging them. Our barracks and storehouses, and the whole village of Peekskill, were sacked and burnt, and the country pillaged." (Davis's Mem. A. Burr.)

Letter of Washington to Putnam.

A singular letter is appended to Humphreys' Life of Gen. Putnam, addressed to the latter by Gen. Washington. As Washington kept copies of all his letters, and as this is not found in Mr. Sparks' collection of his works, there is reason to suspect its authenticity; especially as Mr. Peabody, in his Life of Putnam, published in 1839, has made a very significant addition to the copy thereof in the edition of Humphreys', issued in 1818.

The object of Putnam's letter, to which this purports to be an answer, seems to have been to obtain the opinion and perhaps influence of Washington in respect to his pay when not in actual service, of which the following are extracts:

"Head-quarters, 2d June, 1783.

"Dear sir—Your favor of the 20th of May I received with much pleasure. For I can assure you that among the many worthy and meritorious officers with whom I have had the happiness to be connected in the service through the course of this war, and from whose *cheerful assistance* [and advice I have received much support and confidence] in the various and trying vicissitudes of a complicated contest, *the name of Putnam is not forgotten.*"

The passage in brackets is interpolated by Mr. Peabody, a liberty, it is believed, not often taken in a personal correspondence so near the time of its occurrence,

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whatever may have been the case in ancient polemical writings, not so easily detected.

When the correspondence of these generals, in the course of the war, is taken into consideration, it will hardly appear credible that Washington would seriously express himself as above stated. The remarks, in fact, will admit of a double sense. Washington had, indeed, cause on many accounts *not to forget Putnam.* Among others may be mentioned his conduct at the battle of Long Island, and during his command on the North river, especially his refusing to obey the orders of the former, by his accredited aid-de-camp, Col. Hamilton, to forward reinforcements to him at Philadelphia. "Call you this backing your friends?" The letter contains the following clause:

"The secretary at war, who is now here, informs me that you have ever been considered as entitled to full pay since your absence from the field, and that you will still be considered in that light until the close of the war; at which period you will be equally entitled to the same emoluments of half-pay or commutation as other officers of your rank."

At the date of this letter the war was virtually at an end. Provisional articles of peace had been signed at Paris, by commissioners appointed for that purpose, November the 30th, 1782; and although the definitive treaty was not signed till the 30th of September, 1783, there had been no act of hostility between the two armies, and a state of peace actually existed from the commencement of the year 1783.

The complimentary letter of Gen. Washington, therefore, must be presumed to have originated from a desire on his part to bury in oblivion all former causes of dissatisfaction, and to cultivate the friendly feelings of all those who had acted under his command during the revolutionary struggle, on the near approach of their final separation.

And he probably hoped, by this conciliatory letter,

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to abate the mortification of Gen. Putnam at being so long detained from the army.

"In the campaign of 1779," says Humphreys, "which terminated the career of Gen. Putnam's services, he commanded the Maryland line, posted at Buttermilk Falls, about two miles below West Point." This, by the way, was not a separate command. The post was a dependence of West Point, where Washington commanded in person at this time; which is probably the reason that Marshall says nothing of this command.

When the army went into winter-quarters at Morristown, Putnam made a visit to Connecticut, where he had an attack of paralysis which deprived him of the use of his limbs on one side in a considerable degree.

In that situation he has constantly remained, favored with such a portion of bodily activity as enables him to walk and to ride moderately; and retaining, unimpaired, his relish for enjoyment, his love of pleasantry, his strength of memory, and all the faculties of his mind. As a proof that the powers of memory are not weakened, it ought to be observed, that he has lately repeated, from recollection, all the adventures of his life, which are here recorded, and which had formerly been communicated to the compiler in detached conversations.

In patient, yet fearless expectation of the approach of THE KING OF TERRORS, whom he hath full often faced in *the field of blood*, the Christian hero now enjoys, in domestic retirement, the fruit of his early industry.

The editor of the copy here used, adds:

On the 19th of May, 1790, Putnam ended a life which had been spent in cultivating and defending the soil of his birth.

Much of his life had been spent in arms, and the military of the neighborhood were desirous that the rites of sepulture should be accompanied with martial honors: they felt that this last tribute of respect was due to a soldier, who, from a patriotic love of country, had devoted the best part of his life to the defence of her rights, and the establishment of her independence—and who, through long and trying services, *was never once reproached for misconduct as an officer;* but when

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disease compelled him to retire from service, left it, beloved and respected by the army and his chief, and with high claims to the grateful remembrance of his country.

Under these impressions, the grenadiers of the 11th regiment, the independent corps of artillerists, and the militia companies in the neighborhood, assembled each at their appointed rendezvous, early on the morning of the 21st, and having repaired to the late dwelling-house of the deceased, a suitable escort was formed, attended by a procession of the Masonic brethren present, and a large concourse of respectable citizens, which moved to the Congregational meetinghouse in Brooklyn; and, after divine service performed by the Rev. Dr. Whitney, all that was earthly of a patriot and hero was laid in the silent tomb, under the discharge of volleys from the infantry, and minute guns from the artillery.

An eulogy was pronounced at the grave by Dr. A. Waldo; who said of the defunct—

Born a *hero*—whom nature taught and cherished in the lap of innumerable toils and dangers, *he was terrible in battle!* But, from the amiableness of his heart—when carnage ceased, his humanity spread over the *field*, like the refreshing zephyrs of a summer's evening!—The prisoner—the wounded—the sick—the forlorn—experienced the delicate sympathy of *this* SOLDIER'S PILLAR.—The poor, and the needy, of every description, received the charitable bounties of *this* CHRISTIAN SOLDIER.

He pitied littleness—loved goodness—admired greatness, and ever aspired to its glorious summit! The friend, the servant, and almost unparalleled lover of his country; worn with honorable age, and the former toils of *war*—PUTNAM! "Rests from his labors."

Mr. Peabody closes his Life of Putnam as follows: "It only remains for us to say a few words respecting the military and personal character of one, whose history we have thus attempted to delineate. His qualities as a soldier are already apparent to the reader. Under all circumstances, however critical, he was perfectly fearless and self-possessed, and *full of the most active energy and resource at the time when they were*

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most urgently required. No man could surpass him in the fiery charge, of which the success depends so much upon the leader; in this respect he reminds the reader of Murat, the gallant marshal of Napoleon; nor would the general feeling deny him the proud title, by which another of those marshals was distinguished, that of the bravest of the brave," [Marshal Ney.]

Notwithstanding all that is here said, it is in vain we search the histories of the American revolutionary war for a single *fiery charge* of Putnam; where he gained a victory, or even fought a battle. And as to his feats in the French war, the reader is now enabled to form a just estimate of their value.

Without attributing the effect of magical delusion operating upon the public mind, it is difficult to account for the universal opinion entertained of the character of Putnam so contrary to that which he exhibited through the whole course of his life. All was bluster and bravado, without corresponding action to support his pretensions. Gen. Putnam, however, must have possessed much ingenuity and tact to have acquired the fame of a great warrior without subjecting himself to the personal hazards usually required for that purpose. As to his patriotism, let the reader judge. FIAT JUSTICIA.

THE END.

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